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THE SYMBOLIC NARRATIVES OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The Interplay of Form and Meaning

DOROTHY A. LEE

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Dorothy A. Lee

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For
Edwin and Barbara Lee

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D.A.L.
Queen's College, Melbourne
July 1993

ABBREVIATIONS

Commentaries on John's Gospel in the footnotes are cited only by author's surname, volume and page numbers. A separate list of the commentaries, with full bibliographical details, is given in the bibliography.

AAR	American Academy of Religion
AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AusBR	*Australian Biblical Review*
BAGD	W. Bauer, W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament*
BDF	F. Blass, A. Debrunner and R.W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BEvT	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CahRB	Cahiers de la revue biblique
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
ETL	*Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses*
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FFNT	Foundations and Facets: New Testament
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
IDB	G.A. Buttrick (ed.), *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
Int	*Interpretation*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament* Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LD	Lectio divina
LSJ	Liddell–Scott–Jones, *Greek–English Lexicon*
MM	J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	*Novum Testamentum* Supplements

NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
ResQ	*Restoration Quareerly*
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLSBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBLSP	SBL Seminar Papers
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
TBT	*The Bible Today*
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TTod	*Theology Today*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

INTRODUCTION

The following study examines six long narratives of the Fourth Gospel from a literary critical perspective. These 'symbolic narratives' reveal the complex interplay of form and meaning in the relationship that develops between symbol and narrative. Each narrative is created to unfold a central symbol and the development of the symbol, in turn, draws out the narrative. The parallel unfolding of symbol and narrative takes place in the encounter between Jesus and the leading characters, who struggle to make sense of Jesus and his offer of eternal life. In theological terms, the narratives reveal the way in which material reality becomes symbolic of the divine. The reader is drawn subjectively into the drama and challenged to make the authentic response of faith.

A. *Pattern of the Symbolic Narratives*

I have used the term 'symbolic narrative' in a quite specific and defined sense for these six narratives, not simply as a vague reference to John's overall narrative, but as a technical term for a literary form that is unique to certain parts of the Fourth Gospel.[1] The closest parallel is John Painter's term 'narrative symbol', which he uses in a general way to describe John 9.[2] Painter's concern, however, is

1. The term is used, though in a general, non-specific way, by C.K. Barrett, B. Olsson and S.M. Schneiders: Barrett, p. 436, and Schneiders, 'The Foot Washing (John 13.1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics', *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985), p. 139, use it of the Foot Washing. B. Olsson, *Structure and Meaning in the Fourth Gospel: A Text-Linguistic Analysis of John 2.1-11 and 4.1-42* (Lund: Gleerup, 1974), pp. 114, 250, refers to the Wedding at Cana (2.1-12) as a 'symbolic narrative text'. See also C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 363, on 11.1-53.

2. J. Painter, 'John 9 and the Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel', *JSNT* 28 (1986), p. 42. See also H. Boers, 'Discourse Structure and Macro-structure in the Interpretation of Texts: John 4.1-42 as an Example', in P.J. Achtemeier (ed.), *SBL*

theological rather than literary and he does not enter into discussion of the narrative dynamics. The inversion 'symbolic narrative' is preferable because it stresses the dynamic quality of the texts under discussion within a narrative context.[1] There are six such narratives in the first half of the Gospel:

1. The Story of Nicodemus (3.1-36 [2.23–3.36]).
2. The Story of the Samaritan Woman (4.1-42).
3. The Healing at the Pool (5.1-47).
4. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (6.1-71).
5. The Healing of the Man Born Blind (9.1-41).
6. The Raising of Lazarus (11.1–12.11).

Each of these narratives has its own unique features and belongs within its wider narrative context in the Gospel. Nevertheless, when examined side-by-side, a common narrative structure is discernible which revolves around a central symbol. This distinctive pattern reveals itself in five narrative Stages:

Stage 1: *Foundational Image or 'Sign'*. The narrative begins by establishing an image and/or miraculous event (σημεῖον), such as bread, water, the healing of an individual or feeding of a crowd. It may also include a Jewish feast.

Stage 2: *Misunderstanding*. The central character takes the image and/ or 'sign' in a literal way and assumes mistakenly that it relates to material reality (σάρξ). Furthermore, just as the image and/or 'sign' is misunderstood, so is Jesus who proffers it. He too is (mis)understood on a material level, as merely a provider of material needs.

Stage 3: *Struggle for Understanding*. The ensuing narrative is the struggle of the main character to understand the meaning of the image and/or 'sign' and its giver, involving a dramatic process of understanding through misunderstanding. It takes place in dialogue with

1980 Seminar Papers (SBLSP, 19; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), p. 174, who describes 4.1-42 as 'a myth, a narrative symbol'.

1. It follows that the term 'symbolic narrative' excludes the Wedding at Cana (2.1-12), the Passion and Resurrection Narratives (chs. 18-21) and the Foot Washing (13.1-20). These narratives contain important Johannine symbols, but either do not have a single symbolic focus or are not concerned with the faith development of the leading characters around the central symbol. The Foot Washing has structural similarities to the long narratives of the first half of the Gospel, but, standing at the head of the Farewell Discourse, it finds its meaning within a different narrative context.

Jesus who explicates the meaning in a series of clarifying statements. Stage 3 is usually the longest section of the narrative.

Stage 4: *Attainment or Rejection of Symbolic Understanding.* The struggle for understanding can result in one of two ways (or both): (1) Attainment of Understanding. In the process the main character comes to perceive the image and/or 'sign' as a symbol of eschatological life realisable in the present. Jesus also comes to be perceived in symbolic terms as the one sent from God, the one through whose human σάρξ the divine δόξα is revealed. The movement from a literal or materialistic to a symbolic understanding represents the attainment of faith. (2) Rejection of Symbolic Understanding. Alternatively, the narrative may describe the movement away from faith, in which the symbol is rejected in favour of a materialistic worldview. The images and 'signs' are linked to the religious traditions of Judaism which, for the evangelist, have meaning only in their symbolic relationship with Jesus. These remain on a materialistic level unless reinterpreted from the perspective of Johannine christology. Where Jesus is rejected, it represents the choice of unbelief.

Stage 5: *Confession of Faith or Statement of Rejection.* The narrative concludes with a confession of faith, implying a commitment to discipleship, and/or an explicit statement of rejection of Jesus. Stage 5 is the confirmation and climax of Stage 4.

It may be observed in this pattern that in Stage 1 image and 'sign' are placed on an equivalent level. Of the 'signs' in the first half of the Gospel most are explicitly designated as such within the narrative (see 2.11, 4.54, 6.14, 9.16, 11.47 and 12.18).[1] Other narratives, such as the healing in John 5, betray the characteristics of σημεῖα.[2] The standard view of Johannine 'signs' is that they involve a miraculous happening,[3]

1. These are said traditionally to number seven; see Brown, I, pp. cxlii, 525. Against this, cf. Bultmann, pp. 112-13, and K.H. Rengstorf, 'σημεῖον', *TDNT*, VII, p. 246.

2. For a discussion of the relationship between ἔργον and σημεῖον, see Chapter 4, pp. 95-96.

3. So W. Nicol, *The Semeia in the Fourth Gospel: Tradition and Redaction* (NovTSup, 32; Leiden: Brill, 1972), p. 62, who defines σημεῖον as 'an event which is, by its miraculous character, a legitimising sign of the Christ'; also Brown, I, pp. 527-30, and M. de Jonge, 'Signs and Works in the Fourth Gospel', in *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God: Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective* (SBLSBS; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 117-40. For the opposing view that σημεῖον needs to be understood in a broader and not exclusively

and their importance lies in what they reveal christologically: 'the Christological significance proves to be the most important element of the Johannine "signs", the most characteristic of their properties and the heart of their theology.'[1] The 'signs', in other words, are a stimulus to faith for the characters of the narrative. Their function is to lead the implied reader of the Gospel to a faith response. Commentators tend to make a good deal of the importance of the 'signs', particularly in the first half of the Gospel.[2] This kind of emphasis on 'sign', however, can be misleading. 'Signs' primarily reveal the divine δόξα (2.11) which, in the context of John's incarnational perspective (1.14), is an important indication of their true nature. In fact, the most important feature of the Johannine σημεῖα is that they function as symbols.[3] From this it follows that fundamentally they are no different from the images to be found in John's symbolic narratives. Both 'sign' and image need to be understood within the symbolic framework of the text. Like the images of the Gospel, the 'signs' function to reveal and communicate a symbolic level of reality that arises out of, yet also transcends the material world.

The struggle that confronts the characters of the drama is thus to understand 'sign' and image symbolically. Those who fail to see the imagery in metaphorical terms are on the same level as those whose faith is based only on the miraculous. Though 'signs' differ from the images in being miraculous events, the difference is superficial in terms of the narrative and the struggle for faith. The feasts also belong within the same framework: their function is to point symbolically to

miraculous way, cf. Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 297, 300-303, who sees the Cleansing of the Temple (2.13-22) as a 'sign', and Schneiders, 'Foot Washing', pp. 137-38, who regards the Foot Washing as 'a sign *par excellence*' (p. 137). See also B. Byrne, 'The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20', *JSNT* 23 (1985), pp. 85, 88-91, and S.M. Schneiders, 'The Face Veil: A Johannine Sign (John 20.1-10)', *BTB* 13 (1983), pp. 94-97, both of whom who regard the σουδάριον at 20.7 as a 'sign'.

1. Schnackenburg, I, p. 525.
2. See, e.g., Brown, I, pp. cxxxviii-cxliii, pp. 525-32.
3. See S.M. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel', in M. de Jonge (ed.), *L'Evangile de Jean: sources, rédaction, théologie* (BETL, 44; Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1976), pp. 371-76 (373), and 'Symbolism and the Sacramental Principle in the Fourth Gospel', in P.-R. Tragan (ed.), *Segni e sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni* (Studia Anselmiana, 66; Rome: Editrice Anselmiana, 1977), pp. 221-35 (223, 227).

a deeper reality. The basic element of symbolic narrative, therefore, is symbol, of which image, 'sign' and feast are manifestations.

B. *Johannine Studies on Narrative and Symbol*

The impetus for undertaking a study such as this arises out of contemporary literary studies of the Fourth Gospel. In particular, an important stream in Johannine studies is concerned with the narrative mechanisms of the text and the way its symbolism develops.[1] The most important in recent years has been Culpepper's narrative study of John's Gospel,[2] in which he gathers together insights from the secular discipline of literary criticism and applies them to the Fourth Gospel. For him, the purpose of the Gospel (20.31) is fulfilled through narrative devices: irony, misunderstanding, symbolism, characterisation and plot. The implied reader is drawn into the narrative world,[3] through shared omniscience and the structure of the plot.[4] More

1. For a thorough review of the literature in this area, see D.A. Lee-Pollard, 'The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel: The Interplay of Form and Meaning' (unpublished thesis, University of Sydney, 1991), pp. 21-37.

2. R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (FFNT; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). See also Culpepper, 'The Narrator in the Fourth Gospel: Intratextual Relationships', in K.H. Richards (ed.), *SBL 1982 Seminar Papers One Hundred Eighteenth Annual Meeting* (SBLPS, 21; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 81-96; 'Story and History in the Gospels', *RevExp* 81 (1984), pp. 467-78, and 'John', in B.W. Anderson (ed.), *The Books of the Bible. II. The Apocrypha and the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), pp. 209-23. For examples of recent studies of Johannine narrative that stress the necessity of both narrative and historical approaches to the Fourth Gospel, see M.W.G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and M.C. de Boer, 'Narrative Criticism, Historical Criticism, and the Gospel of John', *JSNT* 47 (1992), pp. 35-48.

3. The notion of 'implied reader' in literary critical jargon is an idealised creation of the text to which corresponds the 'implied author', both being distinct from the real author and reader of the Gospel; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 98, 210-12. See also J.L. Staley, *The Print's First Kiss: A Rhetorical Investigation of the Implied Reader in the Fourth Gospel* (SBLDS, 82; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 27, who defines the implied author as 'the unifying sense that the reader makes of a narrative, irrespective of how many real authors or editors may lie behind it'.

4. For W. Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 275, a text without a reader remains virtual until the 'convergence of text and

pertinently, Culpepper offers an overview of symbolism in John,[1] tracing the core symbols throughout the narrative.[2] He identifies the issue of symbolism as an area of research,[3] offering guidelines for future undertakings.[4]

The most helpful definition of symbol in relation to John's Gospel comes from the work of Sandra M. Schneiders. She sees symbol as the experience of a transcendent reality which has its source firmly located within material reality.[5] Schneiders notes the distinction between sign (in the everyday, non-Johannine sense) and symbol. Whereas the sign stands for something absent, the symbol brings to expression that which is present.[6] 'The symbol is an epiphany of present reality, not an indication of an absent one.'[7] Johannine symbolism, in this sense, is the Gospel's 'characteristic revelatory mode'.[8] The point relates as much to the literary nature of the Gospel as to its theology: the Johannine Jesus is the artistic 'symbolization of God' on which the narrative of the Gospel depends.[9] Because the symbolic nature of the Gospel is a 'condition of validity for its interpretation', its theological meaning cannot be divorced from its symbolic framework.[10]

reader brings the literary work into existence'. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 32-33, and Staley, *Print's First Kiss*, which is a study of the Fourth Gospel from the perspective of reader response criticism (esp. pp. 50-118).

1. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 180-81.
2. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 190-97.
3. Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 188-89.
4. In regard to terminology, I have used 'narrator' in the sense defined by Culpepper, whereas 'the evangelist' or 'John' I have used interchangeably of the implied author. Masculine pronouns are used in accordance with the masculine name traditionally given to the Fourth Gospel, though it may bear no relation to the actual author/s of the Gospel. The masculine pronoun is counterbalanced by referring to the 'implied reader' with feminine pronouns.
5. See Introduction, p. 8.
6. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism', p. 372, and 'Symbolism', p. 223. According to G. Stemberger, *La symbolique du bien et du mal selon saint Jean* (Parole de Dieu; Paris: Editions du Seuih, 1970), p. 14, a symbol is always a sign, but a sign is not necessarily a symbol; for him this parallels the fundamental difference that exists between symbol and allegory.
7. Schneiders, 'Symbolism', p. 224.
8. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism', p. 376.
9. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism', p. 373.
10. See also the the work of R. Kieffer and X. Léon-Dufour who have attempted

A similar perspective, uniting theological meaning and narrative form, is found in a number of recent discussions on irony. If anything, these discussions have shed as much light on symbolism as on irony,[1] partly because the claims made for irony are sometimes excessive and misplaced. Gail O'Day, for example, who has perceptive insights into the theological significance of Johannine narrative, sees irony as John's characteristic revelatory mode. It can only take effect as the reader responds to the ironical shape of the narrative and comes to share the vision of the Johannine community.[2] Irony, in O'Day's view, operates simultaneously on two levels in the text that relate theologically to the σάρξ–δόξα paradigm of the Gospel:

> Through his use of irony, the Fourth Evangelist asks the reader to see the real meaning *in* and *through* the expressed meaning, not as independent or removed from it (to use Bultmann's terms, the δόξα [glory] must be seen in the σάρξ [flesh]).[3]

The problem here is that, in theological terms, too much is made to hang on irony;[4] its meaning is stretched to make it function as far

to bring a more integrated perspective to bear on John's use of symbol; see R. Kieffer, *Le monde symbolique de Saint Jean* (Paris: Cerf, 1989) and X. Léon-Dufour, 'Towards a Symbolic Reading of the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 27 (1981), pp. 439-56. Léon-Dufour ('Symbolic Reading', pp. 440-41) prefers to speak of 'symbolic operation' rather than symbol in the narrative, while Kieffer (*Le monde*, pp. 97-113) relates the images of the Gospel to the 'stage-pictures' (or scenes) of the Gospel and sees the images, scenes and metaphors as working together to create the narrative.

1. For example, G.W. MacRae, 'Theology and Irony in the Fourth Gospel', in R.J. Clifford and MacRae (eds.), *The Word in the World: Essays in Honor of F.L. Moriarity* (Cambridge, MA: Weston College Press, 1973), pp. 83-96; P.D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); and G.R. O'Day, 'Narrative Mode and Theological Claim: A Study in the Fourth Gospel', *JBL* 105 (1986), pp. 657-68, and *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Mode and Theological Claim* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986). See also D.W. Wead, 'Johannine Irony as a Key to the Author-Audience Relationship in John's Gospel', in F.O. Francis (ed.), *Biblical Literature: 1974 Proceedings (AAR Annual Meeting)* (Tallahassee: AAR, 1974), pp. 33-44, and G. Johnston, '*Ecce Homo!* Irony in the Christology of the Fourth Evangelist', in L.D. Hurst and N.T. Wright (eds.), *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament. Studies in Christology in Memory of G.B. Caird* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 125-38.

2. O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 31; also pp. 33-48.

3. O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 8.

4. O'Day is influenced here by MacRae's view that 'in the Fourth Gospel

more than a literary device.[1] The same problem, however, does not attach to symbol; being more than a literary device, it is better able to bear the weight of John's theological worldview. Much of this kind of analysis of irony in relation to narrative is more aptly focused on symbol, where it is genuinely illuminating.

Useful analysis of narrative elements, that nevertheless fails to give adequate attention to symbol, is found in other literary or form critical studies of the Fourth Gospel. For example, an important work that emphasises the formal, structured character of Johannine narrative is Edeltraud Leidig's analysis of the conversations between Jesus and individuals (or groups) in the Fourth Gospel.[2] Leidig identifies what she considers to be a new literary *Gattung* within John's Gospel: 'Glaubensgespräche'.[3] Each of these 'faith conversations' contains three levels and four steps within each level:[4]

(a) *Handlungsstufen*, relating to the action of Jesus.
(b) *Gesprächsschritten*, relating to Jesus' words.
(c) *Erkenntnisstufen*, dealing with the response of the partner in a series of stages of recognition or acknowledgment.

Leidig sees an overarching pattern in the stages of revelation and faith within each step of the three levels: the encounter with salvation ('Heilsbegegnen'), the offer of salvation by Jesus ('Heilsangebot'), the experience of salvation ('Heilserleben') and the confession of Jesus as the bringer of salvation ('Bekenntnis zum Heilbringer').[5]

Leidig's work is particularly important in drawing attention to the widespread, though somewhat unfocused, impression that Jesus' encounters with individuals in the Fourth Gospel are narrated in a highly structured and formalised manner. In one sense, her careful analysis confirms that impression. At the same time, the actual schema she proposes has a number of limitations. It is overly complex, with

theology *is* irony' (MacRae, 'Irony', p. 89); see Duke, *Irony*, pp. 2, 111.

1. See Duke's helpful definition in *Irony*, pp. 13-18, esp. p. 17.

2. E. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch mit der Samaritanerin und weitere Gespräche im Johannes-evangelium* (Theologische Dissertationen, 15; Basel: F. Reinhardt Kommissionverlag, 1981).

3. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 162. She identifies twelve such dialogues in the Fourth Gospel (pp. 175-241).

4. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 163-66.

5. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 167-74.

its confusing pattern of layer upon layer. Moreover, it fails to engage with the literary critical world, remaining within the more traditional limits of form criticism. There is no awareness of narratology to give an appropriate narrative framework for the 'faith conversations'. Nor is there any attention given to the symbolism around which so many of the Johannine conversations between Jesus and individuals turn.

Finally, brief reference should be made to two important theological studies of the Fourth Gospel that elucidate the theological framework in which symbol and narrative operate. Once again, neither of these has the appropriate understanding of symbol and narrative to carry through these insights. Painter, first of all, sees the symbols of the Gospel as eminently suitable for the role they play in revealing the saving work of the Logos because they originate in the creative work of the Logos (1.3, 10). For the evangelist, the world is a 'storehouse of symbols which can become vehicles of the revelation',[1] implying an analogical relationship between biological and eternal life.[2] Through creation, the world has the potential for becoming symbolic, but it remains potential until apprehended by human beings.[3] While John does not speak of the image of God, says Painter, the notion of people as created with the potential to respond is 'the Johannine equivalent'.[4] Human beings have so failed to bear the divine image that there is an abyss between human reality (failure to perceive), revealed in the coming of the Logos, and human destiny (potential to perceive), offered in the saving work of the Revealer. The purpose of the symbols, according to Painter, is to challenge false perceptions and restore the divine image.[5]

Painter's work is helpful more for its theological understanding than for any literary analysis. The same can be said of Marianne Meye Thompson,[6] whose main agenda is to defend the centrality of σάρξ in

1. Painter, 'John 9', p. 47, and *John: Witness and Theologian* (London: SPCK, 3rd edn, 1986), pp. 140-41.

2. Painter, 'John 9', p. 53.

3. Painter, 'John 9', p. 54, quoting Bultmann, 9, and R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965), II, p. 21.

4. Painter, 'John 9', p. 51.

5. Painter, 'John 9', pp. 50-55.

6. M.M. Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

John's theological framework. Influenced by Bultmann,[1] she sees flesh as the neutral contrast between the human/natural and the divine (see 1.13, 1.14, 3.6, 6.51c-58, 6.63, 8.15, 17.2):

> the root meaning of flesh is humanity, creatureliness, what is natural and earthly... σάρξ refers to the human realm in contrast to the divine and natural existence in contrast to the life given by the Spirit.[2]

Thompson argues for this definition over against views that interpret σάρξ as irrelevant for faith (for example, Luise Schottroff[3]) or merely a necessary pre-condition for the appearance of 'the God who walked the earth' (Käsemann).[4] Thompson also stresses the materiality of the 'signs' as pointing to the humanity of Jesus.[5] All of this is vital for understanding John's incarnational perspective. What it lacks, however, is a theological understanding of symbol in which the incarnation can be located.[6] Thompson's attempts to balance the claims of σάρξ with that of δόξα are finally left unsupported by an adequate theological, or for that matter literary, framework.

C. *Aims of This Study*

In spite of—or perhaps because of—these insights into narrative and symbol in the Fourth Gospel, further investigation in the area is vital for the future of Johannine studies. Indeed, such work is only just beginning. This study of six narratives aims to push forward, though with significant modifications, the insights already gained, remedying omissions in a literary understanding of the Fourth Gospel in the following respects:

1. Thompson, *Humanity*, p. 34; see Bultmann, pp. 60-72, and *Theology*, II, pp. 40-49.
2. Thompson, *Humanity*, p. 49. It is important to note that, although σάρξ is a neutral term in the Fourth Gospel, it is only ever used of Jesus in a positive sense.
3. L. Schottroff, *Der Glaubende und die feindliche Welt: Beobachtungen zum gnostischen Dualismus und seiner Bedeutung für Paulus und das Johannesevangelium* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970).
4. E. Käsemann, 'The Structure and Purpose of the Prologue to John's Gospel' in *New Testament Questions of Today* (NTL; London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 161; see Thompson, *Humanity*, pp. 35-36.
5. Thompson, *Humanity*, p. 56.
6. Thompson's conviction of the materiality of 'signs' is problematical since it turns not on the notion of symbol, but rather its 'facticity' (p. 32). Whether that refers to the historical or the Johannine Jesus is unfortunately not made clear.

(a) *Symbol and Narrative.* The inter-relationship between symbol and narrative in specific Johannine narratives is largely neglected and needs greater attention. In order to achieve this, I have attempted to incorporate an adequate understanding of symbol as it is articulated through narrative, on the basis that neither can be understood without the other. In exploring the dynamic interaction of symbol and narrative I have defined more precisely the points of integration between them: the narrative gives rise to the symbol, just as the symbol creates the narrative.

(b) *Literary Structure.* I have already outlined the discrete literary structure underlying the six narrative texts of the Gospel which are the focus here. The relationship between symbol and narrative is manifested through these five narrative Stages. Within the literary pattern the relationship between narrative and symbol is validated. Scholars have examined various aspects of the narratives of the Fourth Gospel and have recognised the presence of narrative designs, sometimes with formal, structured elements. However, there has been no intensive investigation of these six narratives as a distinctive literary group. No proposed literary structure has been suggested which embraces them. This study aims to rectify that omission and in doing so, to offer fresh insights into John's narrative and theological craft.

(c) *Fusion of Literary Form and Theological Meaning.* The question of the way in which literary pattern and theological meaning cohere needs further reflection in relation to specific texts. There is a remarkable level of coherence between form and meaning within the six narratives, which is grounded in the evangelist's theology. At the basis of John's symbolic perspective, reflected in the narrative form, is that of the Word-made-flesh. Just as God, for the evangelist, can only be apprehended through the σάρξ of the incarnate Logos in whom the divine δόξα dwells, so also meaning in the Fourth Gospel can only be grasped for the implied reader through the narrative structures. Here we find also the integration of text and reader. Through a right reading of the symbolic narratives and the struggle for understanding which they reveal, an authentic reader response is facilitated. The narratives give rise to faith and to the embracing of John's symbolic worldview.

In the chapters that follow, each of the long narratives in the first half of the Fourth Gospel is examined in turn to see whether, and to what extent, it conforms to the design of symbolic narrative outlined

above (Chapters 2–7). Each narrative is placed within its chronological setting within the Gospel, followed by an outline of the narrative that deals briefly with critical and exegetical issues. The five Stages are then identified within the contours of John's theological and symbolic framework, illuminating the narrative cohesion between form and meaning. The study ends with a summation of the argument and an indication of its theological implications (Chapter 8). Before embarking on this programme, however, it is important to begin by raising some of the methodological issues operative in the interplay of form and meaning. The focus for this literary and philosophical discussion is metaphor and symbol (Chapter 1).

Chapter 1

FORM AND MEANING: METHODOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

The basic presupposition of this study of Johannine narrative is that form and meaning belong together. In John's Gospel this is not simply a literary judgment but is also theological. John's worldview is set out in the Prologue at 1.14: καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν· καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας. This is a statement of the essential unity of form and meaning. The divine δόξα—in John's theological terms—is seen in the human flesh of Jesus as he is presented in the Fourth Gospel. This has implications for the whole Gospel. Jesus, the incarnate Logos, is the one who reveals not just things about God, nor even God in an abstract, metaphysical sense, but rather discloses in his own person (σάρξ) that God is to be found in material reality: 'It is in his sheer humanity that he is the Revealer.'[1] In the Johannine worldview, it means also that material and human reality (σάρξ) is to be seen in a new way as potentially God-bearing and God-revealing. Behind this lies a doctrine of creation: 'Incarnation...means, as the Prologue unmistakably indicates, the encounter of the Creator with his creature.'[2] As human beings are made in God's image (Gen. 1.26-27), so in the Johannine

1. Bultmann, p. 63. For a discussion of the centrality of revelation in the Fourth Gospel, with particular reference to Bultmann, see J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 515-53.

2. E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2nd edn, 1968), p. 34. Käsemann, however, does not believe that the idea of incarnation is central to John's theology. For him, σάρξ is simply a necessary pre-condition for the entry of the Logos into the world; indeed John may be accused of a 'naive docetism' in this regard (pp. 9-13, esp. p. 26).

view salvation involves centrally the human capacity to image the divine being. This is seen above all in the Johannine Jesus.

The incarnational nature of John's theology is paralleled by the way in which theological meaning is formed and carried by the literary structures of the Fourth Gospel. Narrative structures, with their attendant rhetorical devices, are indispensable bearers of meaning, creating a reader and giving rise to faith as an authentic reader response. In formalist terms, such structures cannot be peeled away in order to disclose a pure, Johannine message. Just as σάρξ cannot be discounted in John's theology, neither can narrative or symbolic form be discarded in favour of a detachable view of meaning. In this sense, form and content, in literary terms, parallel the theology of incarnation in the Fourth Gospel. Indeed they belong to the same order of reality.

A. *Importance of Literary Criticism*

From this it follows that a literary reading of John's narratives is vital, as much for an appreciation of their theology as their literary merits. A literary approach to the Gospels is relatively recent and owes much to the work of such scholars as Amos Wilder and John Dominic Crossan.[1] It has also benefited from burgeoning interest in Old Testament narratology which has rediscovered Hebrew narrative, 'eclipsed' with the rise of biblical criticism,[2] and identified its characteristic literary structures.[3] This perspective has led to a new

1. See A. Wilder, *Early Christian Rhetoric: The Language of the Gospel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), which is concerned with rhetorical forms and genres in the language of the NT, and J.D. Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), which analyses the parables of Jesus from a literary perspective.

2. See H. Frei's study of this theme in eighteenth and nineteenth century hermeneutics in *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 1974).

3. See especially the work of R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), and A. Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series, 9; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); also R. Alter and F. Kermode (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). Of particular note is the influence of E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of*

sensitivity to various aspects of literary form within the Gospels, and an increased awareness of the role of the reader.[1] It is linked also to a critique of the inadequacies of a methodology that regards content as prior to, and therefore more important than form.[2] Although study of the Gospels has not always been impervious to the importance of literary structure, form has often been used chiefly as an indicator of historical realities behind the text and the *Sitz im Leben* of the community. Here the meaning of the text has been sought more in the historical setting behind the text than within the literary structures.

The same problematical attitude to form is present in Bultmann's demythologising, where the myth is stripped away to expose the core of the *kerygma*.[3] Myth is seen as little more than a vehicle for conveying existential realities which speak to modern human experience.[4]

Reality in Western Literature (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953) who, writing as a literary critic, challenges the view that denies the literary nature of the Bible (esp. pp. 3-49).

1. See W.A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 1-13, and N.R. Peterson, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 9-48, for an introduction to literary criticism from a New Testament perspective. For a brief history of the rise of literary critical approaches in biblical study, see T.R. Wright, *Theology and Literature* (Signposts in Theology; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), pp. 42-58.

2. This is not to say that literary form has been ignored. Form criticism has been concerned at least with the generalities of form, that is, classifying and identifying various literary forms, and reducing them to their most typical characteristics. On this, see J. Dewey, *Markan Public Debate: Literary Technique, Concentric Structure, and Theology in Mark 2.1–3.6* (SBLDS, 48; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1979), pp. 11, 18, 25, who develops a literary-critical study of the Markan text out of a preliminary form-critical analysis.

3. Speaking of the Bultmannian approach, Beardslee, *Literary Criticism*, 2, comments that 'it... thrusts literary form into the background as secondary and separable from the existential stance which the form expresses'; also L. Poland, *Literary Criticism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Critique of Formalist Approaches* (AAR Academy Series, 48; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 1-2, 36, 65.

4. R. Bultmann, 'New Testament and Mythology: The Problem of Demythologizing the New Testament Proclamation', in S.M. Ogden (ed.), *New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 1-43. P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 388-94, takes a sympathetic, though not uncritical, view of Bultmann's demythologising. The problem with Bultmann, as Ricoeur sees it, is that he ignores the question of language and under-

Yet as critics of Bultmann have pointed out, to dismantle myth is to lose its meaning. *Kerygma* and myth are bound together; to lose the latter is to lose both.[1] The point applies equally to poetry, myth, narrative structure and symbol. Biblical poetry, for example, 'is quintessentially the mode of expression in which the surface is the depth'.[2] It is illegitimate, therefore, to search for hidden meanings which bypass the surface meaning.[3] Literary criticism, which is concerned precisely with the 'surface' of the text, has an integral role to play in the understanding and interpreting of biblical texts.[4]

A literary approach to the biblical text, however, needs to be seen as balancing the findings of the historical critical method rather than replacing or dismissing them. Alter and Sternberg, for example, two Old Testament literary critics, assert the value of historical critical methods for understanding Scripture. Sternberg, in particular, sees the historical critical method as a necessary first step in analysing a text. What literary criticism does is to move a step further and examine the literary form in and of itself. Nevertheless, both methods are desirable; at some point 'the two orientations must converge'.[5] The problem is not that scholars have concerned themselves with the text's '*genesis*', but rather that that has all too often been at the cost of

estimates the 'objectivity' of the text, because of too sharp a disjunction between *kerygma* and myth (pp. 394-401).

1. So Poland, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 11-63, 65.

2. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), p. 205.

3. See Léon-Dufour, 'Symbolic Reading', p. 441. To substantiate the point, Léon-Dufour notes the etymology of συμβόλον as derived from συμ-βάλλω meaning to 'put together'.

4. According to the literary critic Stephen Prickett, in his study of the relationship between biblical and literary studies over the last three hundred years, the two disciplines belong together and in their modern manifestation have a common origin, being separated only artificially (*Words and* the Word: *Language, Poetics and Biblical Interpretation* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986] esp. pp. 37-195). Literary criticism was brought to birth by scholars of the Bible concerned to assert the poetic nature of all biblical language and to study it from the perspective of the 'peculiar language of heaven' (p. 41). For Prickett, the two disciplines also share common concerns about the nature and interpretation of texts, and need in some way to be re-united. See also J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984), p. 141.

5. Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 23.

its '*poiesis*'.[1] Sternberg is seeking a relationship between 'genesis' and 'poiesis' that is complementary rather than polemical.[2]

B. *Dynamics of Form and Meaning*

Discussion concerning the interplay of form and meaning is by no means unique to literary and textual studies. Beneath these disciplines lie deeper questions of a philosophical nature which go the heart of our understanding of reality and the role that linguistic structure plays in it. While my purpose is not to enter into philosophical and linguistic debate on the nature of language, the underlying philosophical questions need to be acknowledged. Does language express a pre-existent meaning, or is it active in creating meaning? Is it the conveyer of meaning or does it in some sense determine what we name 'reality'? Is it legitimate to speak of language as 'the house of Being' in which we play out our human experience?

Fundamentally, what is at stake is a reaction in modern European thought to a philosophical disjunction between subject and object. This distinction, which can be traced back more immediately to Descartes, draws a line between the knowing subject (the internal mind or self) and the known object (the external world).[3] The Cartesian model, which influenced the Enlightenment, focuses on questions of epistemology rather than ontology, and posits a reality which exists 'out there', independent of I, the subject. It is in effect a revised form of dualism. Kant challenges this perspective with the epistemological recognition that the perceiver is subjectively involved in every act of perception; in philosophical terms, he 'removes the [Cartesian] privileges from subjectivity and in doing so destroys the possibility of an empiricist theory of the mind'.[4] The Cartesian method is further challenged, on the grounds of its dualistic assumptions, by Cassirer:

> Descartes' metaphysical dualism is ultimately rooted in his methodological dualism: the theory of the absolute division between the substance of

1. Sternberg, *Poetics*, p. 16.

2. In a similar vein, Berlin (*Poetics*, pp. 111-34) argues that a synchronic approach does not rule out the importance of a diachronic study of the text; to accept the unity of a biblical text is not to deny its pre-history.

3. For a succinct discussion of the 'Cartesian method', see R. Scruton, *From Descartes to Wittgenstein: A Short History of Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 29-39, esp. pp. 37-38.

4. Scruton, *Descartes to Wittgenstein*, p. 141.

> extension and the thinking substance, is merely a metaphysical expression for an antithesis which is discernible in his account of the pure function of consciousness.[1]

Writers such as Susanne K. Langer and Paul Ricoeur have made a similar point.[2] In effect, they have challenged the philosophical framework which lies at the basis of a dualistic understanding of language, precisely because it presupposes meaning and reality before the existence of linguistic form.

An alternative perspective to the dualism of the Enlightenment needs to hold in tension a paradoxical dynamic between form and content; without such a dynamic, the one becomes subsumed under the other. Here form needs to be seen as the expression of meaning and, at the same time, its creator. One way of expressing this tension is to use Murray Krieger's image of the window and the mirror: a literary work is turned in on itself and relates only to itself, like a series of mirrors reflecting each other, yet it also acts as a window on the world outside.[3] The imagery is capable of operating at several levels and is particularly useful in describing the interrelationship of form and meaning. Meaning as an internal function resides within form (mirror) and at the same time form also expresses external meaning (window). Both perspectives must be held simultaneously so that the literary text is able miraculously to satisfy both propositions at once, being at once wholly thematic and wholly aesthetic, answerable to itself only by being answerable to the outside world.[4] Symbol, in particular, offers an excellent example of the way in which this paradoxical dynamic operates.

1. E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. I. *Language* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 104.

2. S.K. Langer speaks of the 'bifurcation of nature into an inner and an outer world' as inherent in the Cartesian model (*Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 3rd edn, 1969], pp. 12, 17). According to Ricoeur, *Conflict of Interpretations*, p. 148, 'The philosopher trained in the school of Descartes knows that things are doubtful, that they are not what they appear to be. But he never doubts that consciousness is as it appears to itself. In consciousness, meaning and the consciousness of meaning coincide.'

3. M. Krieger, *A Window to Criticism: Shakespeare's Sonnets and Modern Poetics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 1-70; esp. the analogy on pp. 68-69.

4. Krieger, *Window*, p. 18.

Form as the Giver of Meaning: Role of Symbol

In the first place, by examining how symbolism operates, we can observe the way in which *form gives rise to meaning*. Symbol, like metaphor, is not a decorative or pedagogical device to enhance an abstract concept; still less is it a secret language to be decoded (like allegory). On the contrary it bears or conveys within itself the realities to which it points. Schneiders defines symbol as 'a sensible reality ...which renders present to and...involves a person subjectively in... a transforming experience...of the mystery of the Transcendent'.[1] Symbol conveys the transcendent within its structures and invites subjective participation as reader response. While it may be possible to articulate the symbol, such articulation cannot be substituted for the symbol itself. For example, the relationship between the historical Jesus and the Johannine Jesus is that of symbol to symbol: the historical Jesus as the 'natural symbol' of God is brought to expression in the Johannine Jesus as the 'artistic symbol'.[2] In the same way, symbolism in art does not set out to copy or repeat what is in nature. Rather, a new symbol is created in the artistic articulation of the natural symbol: in this sense the Fourth Gospel can be described as 'a literary icon of Jesus'.[3] In John's Gospel, which is quintessentially symbolic, form and meaning belong intimately together.

To speak in these terms of the role of symbol in a literary work is to challenge not only the dualism of the Enlightenment but also its rationalism. The view that human nature is primarily rational gives priority to the analytical mode of expression and denigrates metaphor, symbol and myth to the level of the ornamental. Cassirer's challenge is an attempt to reverse the perception of the role of symbol within the structures of language. Describing the human person as primarily *animal symbolicum*, he argues that far from having a merely decorative function all language is essentially symbolic.[4] Symbols are not 'mere figures which refer to some given reality by means of suggestion and allegorical renderings, but...forces each of which produces

1. Schneiders, 'Symbolism', esp. p. 223.
2. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism', pp. 374-75.
3. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism', p. 374.
4. E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 26.

and posits a world of its own'.[1] In this sense myth, to take one example, is not so much a way of explaining reality as something that creates reality and has its own life, its own 'positive vitality and activity'.[2] A similar, though developed, perspective is found in the writings of Ricoeur. For him too the most basic forms of human discourse are not analytical but symbolic and mythic: 'Myth constitutes the first major transition from experience to language.'[3] Here Ricoeur is concerned to explore in philosophical and theological terms the way in which symbol operates, particularly within the context of discourse.[4]

Symbol is of particular importance in this discussion because, far more than analytic discourse, it exemplifies the dynamic that exists between form and meaning. According to the literary critics who have influenced Ricoeur, symbol is the bearer of meaning by bringing together elements which at first glance have nothing in common.[5] Symbol reveals the nature of language as tensive (reflecting the tensive nature of reality).[6] Monroe Beardsley describes metaphor, for

1. E. Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), p. 8.

2. Cassirer, *Language*, p. 9.

3. P. Ricoeur, 'Evil, a Challenge to Philosophy and Theology', *JAAR* 53 (1985), p. 637. Ricoeur also quotes Kant, 'the symbol gives rise to thought', in *The Symbolism of Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 357-67.

4. Note in particular Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, and *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977). This challenge to the Enlightenment from writers such as Ricoeur is not intended to denigrate the importance of analytical discourse. For P. Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Texas: Texas University Press, 1976), pp. 71-88, the analytical has an important hermeneutical role. He speaks of a tensive relationship between 'understanding' and 'explanation,' explanation being the rational aspect of hermeneutics and understanding the sympathetic or affective aspect. Interpretation has two movements (*Interpretation*, p. 74): the first from understanding to explanation ('a naïve grasping of the meaning of the text as a whole') and the second from explanation to understanding ('a sophisticated mode of understanding, supported by explanatory procedures').

5. See, among others, I.A. Richards, M. Black, M.C. Beardsley, C. Turbayne and P. Wheelwright (listed in Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 49).

6. P. Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 70, 154. Wheelwright makes a further distinction between 'steno-symbols' and 'steno-language,' which have lost their self-conscious metaphorical quality, and poetic language or symbols which are 'alive, fluid, and... metamorphic' (p. 20).

example, as 'a poem in miniature': it creates new meaning as a poem does.[1] Metaphor, like symbol,[2] works by drawing together two unlike and disparate elements in order to create a new semantic structure. Ricoeur, referring to what he calls the 'surplus of signification' within symbol and metaphor,[3] speaks of tension between the two parts ('tenor' and 'vehicle') of the metaphor.[4] In semantic terms, it is the tension between the two opposing elements of a sentence which by themselves have nothing in common and which, if taken literally, are meaningless. Understood aright, the sentence is a 'semantic impertinence'.[5] When John's Gospel, for example, describes Jesus as the light of the world, a new semantic structure is created, an 'impertinence' which if taken literally is nonsense.

Here Ricoeur is reacting against the classical tradition which sees metaphor (or symbol) as the clothing of one idea in that of another.[6] The view has its origins in Aristotle—μεταφορὰ δ ἐστὶν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά—for whom metaphor (μεταφορὰ, literally 'transference') has to do with denomination and the replacing of one name (ἐπιφορά, literally 'placing upon', 'application') with that of another.[7] For Ricoeur, something more fundamental occurs in the forming of metaphor and symbol: a new semantic reality is forged. Here form gives birth to content in the creation of new meaning, as two unlike elements—in this case 'Jesus' (tenor) and 'light' (vehicle)—are radically fused. The new meaning created is a symbol of archetypal significance.

It follows that, in order to understand metaphor or symbol, one is required to have 'stereoscopic vision', that is, the ability to hold together two different points of view at the same time. Here Ricoeur

1. M.C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (London: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1958), p. 134; see Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 46.

2. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, pp. 45-69, identifies the same semantic structure in metaphor and symbol. See below, p. 34.

3. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 55.

4. For this terminology, see I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936); see also Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 80-81.

5. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 50.

6. See Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, pp. 47-49, for a brief outline of the main tenets of classical rhetoric in regard to metaphor.

7. Aristotle, *Poet.* 22.6.

is influenced by Roman Jakobson's 'split reference' in which metaphor discloses both what 'is like' (between tenor and vehicle) and what 'is not'.[1] The tension within the Johannine metaphorical statement that Jesus is the light of the world is that Jesus is both *like* and *unlike* light: like, in that in the Johannine worldview he illuminates people; unlike, in almost every other way. Moreover it is now impossible to perceive the Johannine Jesus without also bringing in connotations of light. The same is true of light: the metaphor works in the opposite way, so that to conceive of light is to have also a sense of the Johannine Jesus. In this sense, metaphor and symbol are involved in the creation of meaning, giving a semantic basis to the role of form in shaping meaning.

The resulting tension projects a 'world' in front of the text which is the external 'reference' of the symbol and metaphor and through which it challenges and discloses the self. The effect on the reader is the experience of 'disconfirmation', which is the disorienting or overturning of one's worldview.[2] In this view, metaphor and the 'disconfirming' experience belong together. The paradigmatic experience of Scripture is 'disconfirmation' because biblical language is essentially metaphorical.[3] However, there is also a 're-orientation after a disorientation' which is intrinsic to the experience of 'disconfirmation' in any metaphorical utterance.[4]

Meaning as the Creator of Form

Secondly, the way in which symbol operates shows how *meaning gives rise to form.* A methodology that asserts only that language shapes reality and form determines content is, in Krieger's framework, distorted: it is to acknowledge the 'mirror' aspect while ignoring the 'window'. This is true, for example, of the so-called 'New Criticism' which interpreted literature as relating only to itself without external

1. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 247-56.

2. Prickett, *Words*, pp. 149-95. Prickett explores the idea of 'disconfirmation' in the Elijah narrative in relation to the 'voice of thin silence' on Mount Horeb (1 Kgs 19:8-12); see *Words*, pp. 6-18, 228 and Prickett, 'The Status of Biblical Narrative', pp. 41-46.

3. See Prickett, *Words*, pp. 196-242.

4. Ricoeur, 'Biblical Hermeneutics', p. 76, in the context of a discussion on parables. On this point Ricoeur is in disagreement with Crossan who seems to assert only the negative side of 'disconfirmation'; see Poland, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 111-12.

reference, a point of view developed over against Romanticism where literature was valued mainly for its insights into the inner life of the poet.[1] It is a legitimate but insufficient understanding of the role and function of a literary text. Krieger has moved beyond the insights of New Criticism to a model that incorporates the 'window' aspect, in which texts 'reveal the full existential density of life as lived in all its desperate, unresolvable tensions'.[2] This incidentally is also to move beyond the New Critical conviction that literature cannot be paraphrased.[3]

Once again symbol is of particular help in formulating the other side of the form–content dynamic: that form is also the expression of meaning. The semantic structure of symbol, as defined above, itself points to a reality that is self-transcending. Symbol, as we have seen, bears its own reality yet it does so without attempting to imprison it. To choose symbol, as against abstract conception, is to imply that symbol, at least in principle, is better able to disclose the transcendent; by its very nature, it defies precise definition. The language of symbol implicitly rejects essentialist notions of the nature of being, on the grounds that no experience of reality can be finally and definitively articulated within the codes and structures of language. Behind the symbol lies 'une plénitude du signification' which can be interpreted, and even paraphrased, in an inexhaustible number of ways but can never be definitively translated nor finally imprisoned within language.[4] By the implicit acknowledgement of its own limitations, symbol comes closer to the transcendent than analytical modes of discourse. In this sense, symbol acts as the expression of meaning or reality which transcends the structures of language.

C. *Conclusion*

The discussion so far has shown that the fundamental dynamic of form and meaning is one of paradox: literary form as both the conveyer

1. On this, see Barton, *Reading the OT*, pp. 140-57, esp. p. 143.
2. Krieger, *Window*, pp. 17-18.
3. Wright, *Theology*, p. 49, and N. Friedman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 47. See Poland, *Literary Criticism*, pp. 65-105, for a critique of the New Criticism and its influence in biblical studies.
4. Stemberger, *La symbolique*, p. 14.

and the expression of meaning. The paradoxical interplay between the two is seen in Ricoeur's distinction between the semantic and non-semantic aspects of symbol.[1] Symbol is more complex than metaphor. Unlike metaphor, it has a semantic and non-semantic aspect, the latter being rooted mysteriously in the depths of the psyche. Metaphors are but the 'linguistic surface' of symbols.[2] While the semantic aspects of symbol can be analysed along with metaphor in terms of their linguistic structure, the non-semantic aspects are elusive and inaccessible. The latter dimension 'resists any linguistic, semantic, or logical transcription'.[3]

Symbol, in other words, is bound to the human experiences out of which it arises, embedded in external reality. The tension within it between the linguistic and the non-linguistic means that it 'hesitates on the dividing line between *bios* and *logos*. It testifies to the primordial rootedness of Discourse in Life.'[4] In the same way, mythology is the attempt to articulate a sense of the numinous which cannot be fully verbalised but which testifies to the 'sacrality' of the world and human life.[5] Symbol is thus the expression of a larger reality than can be captured in discourse. In its two-fold nature it expresses the paradox, on the one hand, of form giving rise to content (the semantic dimension, in which it operates like metaphor) and, on the other hand, of content giving rise to form (the non-semantic dimension).

It is important to note, before concluding this discussion, that the same dynamic is present in the parables of the Synoptic tradition.[6] According to Ricoeur, parables have three elements: metaphor, narrative, and an external referent (the kingdom of God/heaven).[7] These are also the basic elements of John's symbolic narratives: metaphor

1. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, pp. 57-63.
2. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 53. At the same time, metaphor can be said to be greater than symbol in that it clarifies the semantic aspect of the symbol (pp. 68-69).
3. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 57. Wheelwright, *Metaphor*, p. 92, draws a similar distinction when he defines symbol as a 'relatively stable and repeatable element of perceptual experience, standing for some larger meaning or set of meanings which cannot be given, or not fully given, in perceptual experience itself'; see also pp. 92-110.
4. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, p. 59.
5. Ricoeur, *Interpretation*, pp. 60-61.
6. On this, see R. Kysar, 'Johannine Metaphor—Meaning and Function: A Literary Case Study of John 10.1-8', *Semeia* 53 (1991), pp. 81-111.
7. Ricoeur, 'Biblical Hermeneutics', p. 30.

and narrative coalesce with the referent ζωὴ αἰώνιος, 'eternal life', creating a symbol that is capable of addressing and transforming human life. Similarly, in the parables, the hearer or reader through metaphorical utterance comes face-to-face with the reign of God, so that the ordinary becomes revelatory of the extraordinary. Just as the Synoptic parables are intimately related to Jesus, so too with the Johannine symbols. While Jesus may be termed the 'parable of God' in the Synoptic tradition, so behind John's narrative, Jesus is the 'symbol of God'.

This discussion of symbol within a literary critical and theological perspective forms the basis of the exegetical discussions which follow. I have set out the basic methodological presuppositions for a literary approach which wants to take seriously the dynamic interplay of form and meaning. At the same time, I have outlined the basic understanding of symbol with which I have approached and interpreted the Fourth Gospel. As we have seen, modern study of symbol demonstrates both the way in which form and meaning interact and also the inter-relationship that exists between texts and the experience of their readers. The philosophical and linguistic issues briefly touched on here are intrinsic to my understanding of the biblical text. However, they are particularly relevant to the text of the Fourth Gospel which, in its symbolic outlook, shows a remarkable degree of cohesion between form and content. This coherence is highlighted in those Johannine narratives which are the target of this enquiry.

Chapter 2

JOHN 3.1-36 (2.23–3.36): THE STORY OF NICODEMUS

The story of Nicodemus in John 3 is centred on the image of birth which becomes, through the narrative, a Johannine symbol for eternal life. The narrative is the faith story of Nicodemus who is challenged to move from a materialistic to a symbolic understanding of birth and respond in faith to the revelation of Jesus. It includes also John the Baptist, an important figure in the first half of the Gospel, who provides a foil for the character of Nicodemus and achieves, on behalf of Judaism, what Nicodemus is unable to do. The question we are concerned with here is: In what sense does John 3 conform to the pattern of John's symbolic narratives? As we shall see, for the most part the main elements of symbolic narrative are present. This is the first of such narratives within the Fourth Gospel.

The narrative of John 3 follows upon the opening narrative sequences of the Fourth Gospel: the witness of John the Baptist and consequent gathering of the first disciples (1.19-51), the Wedding at Cana (2.1-12) and the Cleansing of the Temple (2.13-22). While the first chapter of the Gospel acts as a prelude to the ministry of Jesus, John 2.1-22 sets the scene for that ministry: the 'sign' of water changed miraculously into wine is the evangelist's way of announcing the advent of the new. With its rich imagery evocative of both the messianic banquet (Isa. 25.6, 55.1-2) and the gracious hospitality of Sophia (Prov. 9.1-6, Sir. 15.3, 24.19-22), it proclaims the joyful presence of the divine life-giver in Jesus. The same theme, the coming of the new, is re-stated in the Cleansing of the Temple, where it is centred on the death and resurrection of Jesus. The body of the Risen One is now the locus of relationship with God, the 'place' (τόπος) of life and worship. Both narratives contain also a polemical note: the advent of the new involves a radical critique and displacement of the

old. The jars of purification and the Temple in Jerusalem give way before Jesus, who, in relation to the new, is both its giver (the wine) and the gift (his body).[1]

Having set out the basic theme of the Gospel, the narrator now moves to a series of personal encounters between individuals and Jesus, in which the characters struggle to grasp the meaning of the new life within their own experience. Appropriately enough, John begins the encounters with the image of birth and ends, in the narrative of 11.1–12.11, with the theme of life through death. Both narratives form an *inclusio* which encapsulates the theme of entering life out of darkness/ death and binds the symbolic narratives together around the image of the journey to life. They, like the other symbolic narratives, are concerned with enabling the reader to make the journey of faith from death/darkness to life. In the first of these encounters, Nicodemus embarks on the journey, but his story does not move beyond Stage 3.[2] The last two Stages are effected by John the Baptist.

A. *Structure and Overview*

John 3 contains a number of problems which have an immediate bearing on the question of its literary unity. There is the disappearance of Nicodemus after his last question in v. 9, so inconsistent with the manner of his introduction in vv. 1-2; the chapter moves awkwardly between narrative, including dialogue (vv. 1-9, 22-30), and discourse where the speaker is not always clear (see vv. 31-36); and vv. 1-21 contain a number of changes of person (vv. 7, 11, 12). There also seems to be an absence of cohesion in the images of birth, wind and light, and in the major themes of judgment, faith, witness, the relationship between Father and Son, the descent of the Son of Man and the role of Moses. Finally, the whole sequence poses the question of why we should be tied to chapter divisions which do not necessarily reflect narrative units: does the narrative begin at 2.23 or 3.1? does it conclude at v. 9, v. 21 or the end of the present chapter division (v. 36)?

In spite of these difficulties and points of awkwardness, however,

1. Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 297, sees chs. 2 to 4 as a single literary unity, entitled 'the new beginning'. See also Lightfoot, p. 118 and Brown, I, pp. 95-96.

2. Nicodemus' story continues in his two further appearances throughout the Gospel (7.45-52, 19.38-42). See below, pp. 55-57.

John 3 has clear evidence of literary unity in a number of respects. This can be seen particularly in the structure. The story divides into two scenes (3.1-21 and 3.22-30) with vv. 31-36 as a concluding summary.[1] In addition, 2.23-25 operates as a bridge passage between chs. 2 and 3, serving as an introduction to the narrative.[2] Furthermore, the unit as a whole is held together, first by the motif of ἄνωθεν, which brings it back almost to its beginning (vv. 3, 31), and secondly by the summary at vv. 31-36 which makes most sense if Jesus (rather than John the Baptist or the evangelist) is regarded as the speaker.[3]

There are also a number of indications that the first scene, vv. 1-21, is best interpreted as a literary unit.[4] Even allowing for Nicodemus' disappearance in the middle, the section ends in a way that parallels its beginning, forming an *inclusio*.[5] In v. 2 Nicodemus comes (ἦλθεν) to Jesus by night (νυκτός) and in v. 21 Jesus speaks of the one who, ποιῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, comes (ἔρχεται) to the light (πρὸς τὸ φῶς). The *inclusio* encapsulates the ambiguity of Nicodemus, who on the one hand comes to Jesus (itself a Johannine indication of faith, see 6.35), yet on the other fails to recognise the light. The internal structure of vv. 1-21 is built around the two main ἀμήν sayings of vv. 3 and 11 which are important literary indicators, with v. 5 as parallel to, and therefore synonymous with, v. 3. This takes the following form:

1. See G.C. Nicholson, *Death as Departure: The Johannine Descent–Ascent Schema* (SBLDS, 63; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983) 79-80, and Moloney, pp. 127-28, for parallels between vv. 11-21 and vv. 31-36.

2. On this, see I. de la Potterie, '"Naître de l'eau et naître de l'Ésprit." Le Texte baptismal de Jean 3,5', in de la Potterie and S. Lyonnet (eds.), *La vie selon l'Ésprit: Condition du chrétien* (Paris: Cerf, 1965), pp. 41-42; Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 280-82; M. de Jonge, 'Nicodemus and Jesus: Some Observations on Misunderstanding and Understanding in the Fourth Gospel', *BJRL* 53 (1971), pp. 340-41; Nicholson, *Departure,* p. 65, and Z.C. Hodges, 'Problem Passages in the Gospel of John. Part 2: Untrustworthy Believers John 2.23-25', *BSac* 135 (1978), pp. 139-52.

3. Ashton (*Fourth Gospel*, pp. 374-77) proposes that the present structure of Jn 3 is the result of a gradual process of composition by the evangelist.

4. So Brown, I, pp. 136-37, Barrett, pp. 202-19, Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 303-308, Lindars, pp. 145-64 and Haenchen, I, pp. 205-207.

5. De la Potterie, 'Naître', pp. 31-62, esp. p. 45.

Introduction: *Jesus' Knowledge of the Human Heart* (2.23-25)
(bridge passage)
Scene 1: *Coming of Nicodemus* (3.1-21)
Setting vv. 1-2
First major ἀμήν saying: birth ἄνωθεν vv. 3-10
Second major ἀμήν saying: faith in Son of Man vv. 11-15; choice of light/darkness vv. 16-21
Scene 2: *Witness of John the Baptist* (3.22-30)
Setting vv. 23-24
Dispute over baptism vv. 25-26
John the Baptist's witness to the superiority of Jesus vv. 27-30
Summary: *Faith in Jesus as* ὁ ἄνωθεν (3.31-36)

Before setting this within the design of symbolic narrative, it is useful to begin with a more detailed survey of the story:

Introduction and Scene 1: Coming of Nicodemus (2.23–3.21)
(a) The central character, Nicodemus, is introduced by name and title (ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων, v. 1). He visits Jesus at night (νυκτός) and begins the conversation by acknowledging Jesus as a teacher from God and a doer of miraculous 'signs' (v. 2). His opening words are ambiguous: while they indicate a Johannine christology, they represent also the courtesy from one teacher to another.[1]

(b) The reader is given a hint of the level of Nicodemus' faith in the way his opening comments echo the narrator's words at 2.23-25: τὰ σημεῖα...ἃ σὺ ποιεῖς, 3.2, τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει, 2.23. Nicodemus is identified as one of the πολλοί (2.23) who believe, yet whose faith is in some way inadequate (οὐκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς, 2.24).[2]

(c) Jesus introduces the image of birth in response to Nicodemus (v. 3).[3] The latter expresses his astonishment (v. 4) and Jesus repeats

1. For J. Neyrey, 'John III: A Debate over Johannine Epistemology and Christology', *NovT* 23 (1981), pp. 116-19, v. 2 is concerned with epistemology (οἴδαμεν) and christology (ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐλήλυθας διδάσκαλος) which become focal points for the discourse (vv. 1-21 and 31-36).

2. Calvin, p. 60, describes Nicodemus as an example of the 'transient and frail' nature of a faith 'moved by Christ's miracles'. On the repetition of the verb πιστεύω and its significance, see Carson, pp. 184-85.

3. For P. Cotterell, 'The Nicodemus Conversation: A Fresh Appraisal', *ExpTim* 96 (1984-85), pp. 239-40, and 'Sociolinguistics and Biblical Interpretation', *Vox*

the challenge (v. 5), expanding the reference to πνεῦμα in v. 5 in relation to the image of birth (vv. 6-8).

(d) Nicodemus concludes with a question that expresses incredulity and incomprehension (v. 9). Jesus is amazed at so weak a response from one who is ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (v. 10).[1] It is the last explicit mention of Nicodemus in this narrative.

(e) The focus of the second major ἀμήν saying (v. 11) becomes more general, as indicated in the change of subject (vv. 12-13). However, the οἴδαμεν in v. 11 parallels the οἴδαμεν of Nicodemus in v. 2, and the plural is already present within the dialogue (σοί to ὑμᾶς, v. 7). Jesus, who reverts to the singular for himself in v. 12, now responds to Nicodemus on his own terms.

(f) In the first part of the discourse (vv. 11-15), Jesus begins to set out the christological basis of his earlier challenge to Nicodemus. He is the descending Son of Man (v. 13) who offers life to those who believe (vv. 15-16).[2] The image of the bronze serpent is an antitype of Jesus' death (v. 14): believers gain life through the crucified Son of Man just as the plague-stricken Israelites found life through gazing at the serpent lifted up by Moses (Num. 21.4-9) .

Evangelica 16 (1986), pp. 70-71, the fact that Nicodemus initiates the conversation indicates his social superiority over Jesus; however, Jesus takes back the initiative by confronting him with the challenge to faith.

1. De la Potterie, 'Naître', pp. 46-48, sees a double pattern in vv. 3-10 of revelation followed by incomprehension. According to Bernard, I, pp. 100-101, the pattern of the dialogue (also 4.1-42) is a mysterious saying (3.3), followed by an expression signifying astonishment (3.4), followed by repetition of the saying (3.5).

2. H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel Interpreted in its Relation to Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala, 1929; reprint, Chicago: Argonaut, 1968), p. 72, argues that the emphatic οὐδείς of v. 13 contains a polemical note in relation to other ascents into heaven. He concludes that v. 13 'can scarcely be interpreted otherwise than as a strong refutation of some current and prominent doctrine or belief of the time concerning the possibility of ascent into heaven' (pp. 88-89). See also W.A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King. Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), p. 295, who quotes traditions of Moses ascending and enthroned in heaven on Mount Sinai. Thus 'the statement "No one has ascended to heaven" would in this context carry the pointed implication, "not even Moses"' (p. 301). On this, see F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Biblioteca di scienze Religiose, 14; Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 2nd edn, 1978), pp. 58-60 and Talbert, pp. 100-101. The polemic against Moses legends is reinforced by the Moses typology of v. 14.

(g) In the second part of the discourse (vv. 16-21), Jesus develops the theme of faith as the way of coming to life. His offer of life arises out of God's love for the world (v. 16). Through the sending of the Son of Man, human beings are challenged to faith, which Jesus sets out as a two-sided judgment (salvation/condemnation, vv. 19-21).

(h) Ostensibly a conversation between two 'teachers of Israel' (ῥαββί and διδάσκαλος used of Jesus by Nicodemus in v. 2 and ὁ διδάσκαλος used of Nicodemus by Jesus at v. 10), the discourse, as we shall see, acts as a commentary on the dialogue.

Scene 2: Witness of John the Baptist and Summary (3.22-36)

(a) Although scene 2 (vv. 22-30) appears from its opening words and change of setting (μετὰ ταῦτα ἦλθεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν γῆν, v. 22) to begin a new narrative, this is not the case.[1] John the Baptist has an important role in the overall narrative in relation to Nicodemus.[2]

(b) The opening verses (vv. 22-23) contrast the baptising of Jesus and John the Baptist. This leads to a dispute concerning Jesus' rival baptism (vv. 25-26). Though the scene is set in terms that suggest professional rivalry between the two, nothing is further from the case. John the Baptist testifies to Jesus as the Christ (v. 28), relegating his own role to that of second place (vv. 29-30).

(c) The final section (vv. 31-36) resumes the themes, style and speaker of vv. 11-21.[3] Jesus explains that God, who is probably the

1. See Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 280-81.

2. Commentators point to the Johannine context of rivalry with Baptist sects; e.g. Brown, I, pp. lxvi-lxx, and Schnackenburg, I, pp. 167-69. More helpful from a narrative perspective is Brown's comment that these verses bring to the fore the baptismal motif latent in v. 5 (I, p. 155). See below, p. 58.

3. So Brown, I, pp. 159-60, who sees these verses as a third variant of a discourse by Jesus, the other two being located at 3.11-21 and 12.44-50. Traditionally scholars have tended to assume John the Baptist to be the speaker, e.g. Calvin, 82-86. See also J. Wilson, 'The Integrity of John 3.22-36', *JSNT* 10 (1981), pp. 34-41, D. Rensberger, *Overcoming the World: Politics and Community in the Gospel of John* (London: SPCK, 1988), pp. 52, 60-61, and Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 282, 326. Others have suggested it to be the evangelist commenting on preceding events; so Westcott, pp. 57, 60, Bernard, I, p. 117, and Neyrey, 'John III', p. 123; both Carson, p. 185, and Talbert, p. 107, see vv. 16-21 and vv. 31-36 as the reflections of the evangelist.

subject of v. 34b,[1] has given him the prerogative of giving life, to exercise it on God's behalf.[2] Here Jesus summarises the theology that underlies the narrative.

(d) Some have suggested transposing vv. 31-36 to the opening segment, vv. 1-21.[3] However, the abruptness of v. 31 is not sufficient cause for transposing these verses; by smoothing out the text, an important literary sequence is lost.[4] Despite the awkwardness, vv. 22-30 are best seen as an insertion into the discourse of Jesus, with vv. 31-36 as the conclusion to the narrative.[5] The discourse of vv. 11-21 and its resumption in vv. 31-36, frames the witness of John the Baptist in vv. 22-30.[6]

(e) The comparison between Jesus and the Baptist continues in

1. So Schnackenburg, I, p. 387, Lindars, p. 171 and Bernard, I, p. 125.

2. This reinforces the point that it is not christology which lies at the heart of John's Gospel but theology. See Haenchen, I, p. 212, on vv. 34-35: 'Jesus actually stands in God's place as the one who is completely taken up into God's sovereignty'; see also C.K. Barrett, 'Christocentric or Theocentric? Observations on the Theological Method of the Fourth Gospel', in *Essays on John* (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 1-18.

3. So Bernard, I, pp. xxiii, 117-27, and Bultmann, pp. 131-32, 160-66, who place them after v. 21, and Schnackenburg, I, pp. 360-62, who has them following v. 12.

4. There is an interesting parallel with the Prologue which also contains the insertion of two pieces of material in a literary unit dealing with Jesus and John the Baptist (1.6-9, 15). Significantly, these insertions display a degree of literary awkwardness: while the Baptist is introduced smoothly enough at 1.6, the transition to v. 9 is clumsy and no indication is given that the subject of the verb ἦν is no longer the Baptist but Jesus. Similarly, after v. 15 (which concludes with a statement in direct speech by John the Baptist), v. 16 continues without any syntactical acknowledgment that the speaker is now the narrator. This is certainly awkward by modern literary standards, but from a redaction critical perspective it points to the evangelist's desire to insert John the Baptist into traditional material which is concerned only with Jesus. See Neyrey, 'John III', pp. 125-26, and Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 326-27.

5. According to Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 309, vv. 31-36 are a recapitulation of what has gone before; also W.A. Meeks, 'The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism', *JBL* 91 (1972), pp. 44-72; and Léon-Dufour, I, p. 281. Neyrey, 'John III', pp. 121-23, sees vv. 31-36 as the fourth part of the dialogue of Jn 3, the first three being vv. 1-10, 11-17, and 18-21.

6. On the inclusion of John the Baptist, see Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 52-63; also Wilson, 'Integrity', pp. 34-41, who argues for the literary unity of Jn 3 in relation to the role played by the Baptist.

vv. 31-32 where Jesus, as ὁ ἄνωθεν, contrasts himself with the one who is ἐκ τῆς γῆς. This is not derogatory: Jesus speaks in positive terms of the witness of John the Baptist (v. 33).

(f) In the remaining verses, Jesus recapitulates the themes of the whole sequence, with particular focus on its christology (vv. 34-36). There is no narrative ending.

B. *Image of Birth*

Symbolic narratives are structured around a basic image (or 'sign') out of which the narrative arises. In the case of John 3 the foundational image is that of birth. The image captures the central theme of 'initiation into eternal life' as entry into the new order (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεου).[1] As the process of giving birth is fraught with pain and struggle, so the narrative of John 3 is concerned with the 'labour' of entering life, which, like its biological equivalent, has no guarantee of success. The point is seen in the experience of Nicodemus, who as ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων (v. 1), finds only obstacles in the way of entry into God's βασιλεία. Through the image of birth, the evangelist is concerned not only with entry into life but also with the way in which human beings struggle with, and sometimes fail to make, the transition from the old to the new.

That the image relates to birth, however, is by no means undisputed. The same conception is to be found in the Prologue: ὅσοι δε ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, οἳ οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν (1.12-13).[2] The verb γεννάω, used here and at 3.3-8, can refer either to the maternal or paternal roles in producing a child: to 'give birth' or 'beget'.[3] Some have argued that the sense here, as at 1.12, requires the masculine understanding on the grounds that the

1. Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 308.

2. Neyrey, 'John III', pp. 125-26, sets out a synopsis of parallels between the theology of the Prologue and that of Jn 3, concluding that the contents are essentially identical; see also Bultmann, p. 132.

3. It is found in both senses in the LXX, the NT, and also generally in Greek literature; see H.M.F. Büschel and K.H. Rengstorf, 'γεννάω', *TDNT*, I, pp. 665-72. In Jn 16.21 it refers ummistakeably to birth.

Spirit is given no feminine characteristics in the Gospels.[1] However, most interpret it as feminine:[2] 'Jesus was not speaking here of being "engendered" by God, as of a male principle, but of being "born" of God, as from a female principle.'[3] The problem with arguments for the masculine image is that they fail to follow the image through the discourse. The context, however, points to a female image, not only in vv. 3-10 but in echoes throughout the opening sequence (vv. 1-21).

The first and most important indication that we are dealing with a birth image is the reference to water in v. 5. Traditionally this has been seen as an image of christian baptism, a point reinforced by the references to baptism in vv. 22-26.[4] The allusion to baptism, however, is more probably a secondary one; it is rather 'the fundamental process of salvation' which is the main focus of these verses.[5] How then is the reference to water to be understood? In the Gospel of John, water, among other things, is used as an image for the Spirit (see 7.37-39).[6]

1. So Brown, I, p. 129. Haenchen (I, p. 200) argues similarly, suggesting that part of Nicodemus' misunderstanding lies in assuming the meaning 'born again' whereas the Johannine Jesus really means 'begotten from above'. See Barrett, pp. 206-207, and Bernard, I, p. 105, who speaks of the Spirit in John as the begetter; also Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 108-109, 289-90.

2. So Schnackenburg, I, pp. 368-74, Bultmann, pp. 135-38, Lindars, pp. 150-54, and Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 303-305.

3. S.M. Schneiders, 'Born Anew', *TTod* 44 (1987), p. 194.

4. So Brown, I, pp. 141-44, L. Bouyer, *Le quatrième évangile. Introduction à l'évangile de Jean, traduction et commentaire* (Bible et vie chrétienne; Belgium: Casterman, 5th edn, 1963) 88-97; Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 284, 293, 322; Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 66-70; and Moloney, pp. 111-14. For a brief history of the exegesis of this verse, see de la Potterie, 'Naître', pp. 34-41. Note also L. Belleville, 'Born of Water and Spirit', *Trinity Journal* NS 1 (1980), pp. 125-41, esp. pp. 125-34.

5. Schnackenburg, I, pp. 369-70; also Brown, I, pp. 141-42. See R.E. Brown, 'The Eucharist and Baptism in John', in *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), pp. 93-95.

6. The OT (e.g. Ezek. 36.25-26) and Qumran (*1QS* iv.20-21) make the association between water and Spirit; see Lindars, p. 152, and Léon-Dufour, I, p. 283. The same point is made by those who argue that water refers here to the purifying and renewing work of the Spirit, e.g. Calvin, p. 65, and Belleville, 'Water and Spirit,' pp. 134-41. For D.W.B. Robinson, '"Born of Water and Spirit": Does John 3.5 Refer to Baptism?', *Reformed Theological Review* 25 (1966), pp. 15-23, the phrase is a hendiadys; see also Talbert, p. 99. G.R. Beasley-Murray ('John 3.3,5:

Yet to interpret it in this way makes the phrase ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος seem tautologous: why refer to the Spirit twice? The interpretation which takes the immediate context most fully into account is that it is a reference to childbirth.[1] The mention of water in the ancient world is not uncommonly taken to refer 'to the processes of human reproduction and particularly to the actual coming forth from the womb after the breaking of the mother's water'.[2] In this case, what we have here is a continuation of the image of birth first introduced in v. 3.[3]

That the central image is one of childbirth is suggested by other subsidiary images in this section of the narrative. In v. 5, for example, the Johannine Jesus speaks of the new possibility of being able εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, which is a re-statement of v. 3, ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. It is unusual for John to use the term βασιλεία, since unlike the Synoptics, he normally prefers αἰώνιος ζωή. Regardless of why John uses the phrase βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ only here in the Gospel (and three times more, though with a different connotation, at 18.36), it is significant that the concept of eternal life is related to the notion of the βασιλεία, the eschatological realisation of God's reign. To speak of 'seeing' or 'entering' the βασιλεία of God is parallel to the idea of 'entering' or 'seeing' life. So at 3.36 Jesus speaks first of 'having' eternal life (ἔχει, John's usual term), and then of 'seeing' life (ὄψεται ζωήν) which parallels the ἀμήν saying of v. 3 (ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν). Here are secondary

Baptism, Spirit and the Kingdom', *ExpTim* 97 [1986], pp. 168-69) regards water as a reference to John's baptism.

1. Odeberg (*Fourth Gospel*, pp. 48-68) argues that the reference is to spiritual seed (as opposed to terrestrial or sarcical). Barrett, p. 209, dismisses both physiological explanations of semen and amniotic fluid; cf. also D.G. Spriggs, 'Meaning of "Water" in John 3.5', *ExpTim* 85 (1973–74), p. 150 and Carson, p. 191.

2. Schneiders, 'Born Anew', p. 192; e.g. Prov 5.15-18, Cant 4.12-15, *1QH* iii 7-10, and *4 Ezra* 8.8; see B. Witherington, 'The Waters of Birth: John 3.5 and 1 John 5.6-8', *NTS* 35 (1989), pp. 155-58. Note also R. Fowler, 'Born of Water and Spirit (John 3.5)', *ExpTim* 82 (1970–71), p. 159; Spriggs, '"Water"', pp. 149-50, and M. Pamment, 'John 3.5: "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"', *NovT* 25 (1983), pp. 189-90.

3. J. Gray in an unpublished article ('Jesus and Women—The Johannine Community Responds', pp. 6-11) argues that this interpretation accords not only with Jn 3 but also with the Gospel in general where, in her view, womb imagery underlies basic Johannine concepts such as indwelling (μένω).

images which are consonant with the primary image of birth.

The same image, though this time more explicitly, lies behind the reference to πνεῦμα in v. 8a. The image of the wind is particularly apposite after the contrast in v. 6 between birth from the flesh and birth from the Spirit. The reference to the mysterious origins of the wind[1] is analogous to the image of birth from the Spirit, the origins of which are likewise mysterious. The saying is a simile (οὕτως), in which the power and mystery of the wind is a metaphor suggesting the creative work of the Spirit.[2] Like other Johannine images taken from the human or natural order, it derives from the Hebrew Scriptures. In Gen. 2.7, for example, God breathes into the nostrils of the first human creature the 'breath of life' (ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה; LXX: καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν), where 'wind' (רוח/πνεῦμα) and 'breath of life' (נשמת חיים/πνοὴ ζωῆς) are of the same source. Both are linked to the divine Spirit as the source of life. Similarly in Eccl. 11.5, the reference to רוח is made in the context of pregnancy and childbirth.[3] The mystery of the wind at John 3.8 is linked, in other words, to the mystery of natural life since the source of both, πνεῦμα, is the same. The point is reinforced by the narrator's choice of πνεῦμα for 'wind', as against the more common ἄνεμος, which accords with the verb πνέω and emphasises the wind/spirit link.[4] The mystery of the wind and human life speaks metaphorically of the mystery of new birth through the Spirit: both are perceptible in their power and presence, but imperceptible in their origins.

While the image of birth dominates vv. 3-10, it seems to disappear from the discourse (vv. 11-21) and from scene 2 of the narrative

1. In the ancient world the origins of the wind were considered mysterious (e.g. Bar 48.3-4 and 1 Enoch 41.3; 60.11-12); see Brown, I, p. 131.

2. A.M. Hunter (*According to John* [London: SCM Press, 1968], p. 79) classifies 3.8 as a 'miniature parable'.

3. See Lindars, p. 154. The MT does not make clear whether רוח refers to the wind or the breath of life; see R.N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes* (Century Bible; Grand Rapids/London: Eerdmans/Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1989), pp. 159-60, and G.A. Barton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1908), p. 183.

4. So E. Richard, 'Expressions of Double Meaning and their Function in the Gospel of John', *NTS* 31 (1985), pp. 101-102. Cf. Bernard, I, pp. 106-108, who argues that because πνεῦμα never means anything but 'spirit' in the NT (unlike the LXX where it can have either meaning), no ambiguity is intended.

(vv. 22-36). Nevertheless, though not mentioned explicitly, it is implicit in the choice of images that follow. In vv. 16-18, for example, the theme of ζωὴ αἰώνιος is prominent, carrying over into vv. 19-21, where the image of light comes to the fore. The link between light and life is made in the Prologue (1.4) and is developed later in the Gospel (especially 8.12 where Jesus offers human beings τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς). Here images of light and life are consonant with the image of birth: in physiological terms, to enter life is to move from the darkness of the womb into the light of the visible world. This birthing process is a movement which is beset with pain, difficulty and danger. The process of receiving life set out in vv. 16-21 thus originates in the birth image of vv. 3-10, which is the primal human experience of 'illumination'.[1]

In scene 2 of the narrative the image of birth is also implicitly present, an impression confirmed by the reference to Jesus and his disciples baptising (vv. 22 and 26). Jesus' baptism is linked to the requirement of birth made to Nicodemus in vv. 3-8. Both the image of birth and the ritual of baptism are concerned here with initiation into the new life that Jesus brings. Significantly, as we will see, John

1. The verb γεννάω is present in 1 John in a number of places (2.29; 3.9; 4.7; 5.1, 4, 18), indicating that it is part of the literary and theological framework of the Johannine community. In most instances, it refers to birth (so I.H. Marshall, *The Epistles of John* [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], pp. 167-69, 185-87, 210-12, 226-27, 228-29, 251-52). R. Bultmann (*A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* [Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973], pp. 45-46, 65, 76-77, 88) translates it likewise, except in the case of 3.9 where, because of the reference to σπέρμα, he uses 'begotten' (pp. 52-53). The two ideas are hardly incompatible, however, and it is possible that, in order to focus on the indwelling 'seed', the paternal image is employed in 3.9. On the other hand the maternal image cannot be ruled out. It is more probable that the author has incorporated the male role into the female: God is the one who begets and gives birth to τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ (3.9-10). Against the translation 'born', cf. R.E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (AB, 30; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), pp. 384-87, who uses 'begotten' throughout. It is significant that the image of birth in 5.1, 4 is immediately followed by reference to 'the water and the blood', both of which are united in witness with τὸ πνεῦμα (5.6-8). These images have parallels in Jn 3 (also Jn 19.34) and evoke the process of giving birth (see Witherington, 'Waters of Birth', pp. 158-59). However, although there are similarities with John's Gospel, 1 John employs the birth image in a different way. In Jn 3, as we have seen, it refers to the initial processes of entry into eternal life. 1 John, reflecting a later context, uses it of the ongoing life of the believing community where it refers to 'the eschatological reality which should characterize the life of the child of God' (Marshall, *Epistles of John*, p. 252).

the Baptist in his witness makes the necessary transition and summons others to do likewise (vv. 28-30). His baptism in water (v. 23) points to the greater baptism of Jesus ἐν πνεύματι (v. 28; see also v. 34). Secondly, in the concluding summary, v. 36 is constructed in an antithetical parallelism between the phrases ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον and οὐκ ὄψεται ζωήν, which are both dependent on the image of birth, since in order to 'have/see life' a new birth is necessary. The image of birth, therefore, at first explicit and later implicit, holds together the narrative sequence of John 3.

C. *John 3 as Symbolic Narrative*

I have suggested that symbolic narrative is formed by the exploration of a foundational image or 'sign' offered by Jesus as the giver of eschatological life. The narrative is the explication of this image as a symbol of πνεῦμα (synonymous here with δόξα) through the misunderstanding of the central character, who fails, at least initially, to understand its symbolic import and is challenged to a deeper understanding. In vv. 1-21 we see in the story of Nicodemus the pattern of symbol giving rise to narrative through misunderstanding. For the narrator, misunderstandings 'provide a step on which the discourse mounts to a further stage'.[1] In the symbolic narratives, they enable the Johannine Jesus to explicate in greater depth the key symbol of the narrative.

Scene 1: Nicodemus—Stages 1 to 3 (vv. 1-21)

The process begins in the opening exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus in vv. 2-3. Nicodemus initiates the conversation and, in his opening comment (v. 2), introduces, albeit unwittingly, the christological themes of the narrative. Jesus' statement in v. 3 is not a direct response but rather presents a challenge to Nicodemus, establishing the primary image of birth (Stage 1): ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ. In literary terms, Jesus' utterance is a metaphor. As we have seen, metaphors are made up of the fusion of two disparate elements: tenor and vehicle.[2] Here the protasis of the sentence—ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν—acts as vehicle, and the apodosis—οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν εἰς

1. Barrett, p. 208.
2. See above, Introduction, pp. 30-32.

τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ—as tenor.[1] The bringing together of tenor and vehicle expresses a meaning which is patently absurd: adult human beings need to undergo the experience of birth in order to enter into life. Nicodemus immediately acknowledges the absurdity of Jesus' utterance in v. 4: πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος γεννηθῆναι γέρων ὤν; μὴ δύναται εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δεύτερον εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι.

Nicodemus' misunderstanding represents Stage 2 of the narrative. As such it does not yet signify rejection or unbelief. All it indicates is that Nicodemus is still operating on a literal level.[2] But he is also beginning the struggle to understand the metaphorical import of what Jesus has said. Paradoxically, misunderstanding is a necessary stage in the development of the narrative. From a literary point of view, it is only through the collapse of the literal meaning that it is possible to reach the second level, the metaphorical understanding. Once Nicodemus embarks on this struggle, the narrative has reached Stage 3.

Meaning of ἄνωθεν. Nicodemus' misunderstanding is complicated by the ambiguity of the adverb ἄνωθεν in v. 3. He assumes a natural understanding, a *second* birth from his mother's womb (δεύτερον, v. 4). Jesus' repetition of the image (v. 5) clarifies the meaning of ἄνωθεν in the light of Nicodemus' objection: 'the term ἄνωθεν, sloughing off its riddle, now means, quite unambiguously, "from above"'.[3] The reference to πνεῦμα makes it clear that the meaning is 'from above'. This however is a controversial point. While some have adopted the view that ἄνωθεν means 'from above', others have argued for the meaning 'again/anew'.[4] One literary argument to support the latter is

1. To 'see' and to 'enter the kingdom of God' (vv. 3, 5) parallel each other and are also metaphorical, although by this stage of the Gospel tradition, both are probably 'dead' metaphors.

2. Gnilka (p. 27) comments on Nicodemus's response in v. 4: 'seine Frage ist so dumm nicht, drückt aber nur die Unfähigkeit des Menschen aus, Dinge, die außerhalb seiner eigenen Möglichkeiten liegen, zu begreifen.'

3. Ashton, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 535.

4. For the view that ἄνωθεν means 'from above', see Barrett, pp. 205-206; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 303; Haenchen, I, p. 200; Marsh, p. 175; Brown, I, p. 130; Hoskyns, p. 212; Meeks, 'Man from Heaven', p. 150; Neyrey, 'John III', p. 123; and Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 288-89. For the view that ἄνωθεν means 'again/anew', see Calvin, pp. 634-35; Westcott, p. 63; Bultmann, p. 135; Schneiders, 'Born Anew', pp. 191-92; and Witherington, 'Waters of Birth', p. 159. Historical

that Johannine misunderstanding cannot be related to individual words.[1] On this reasoning, 'anew' is the only possible translation since 'Johannine misunderstanding is based on misplaced literalness in interpreting what is said, not on a failure to understand the actual words.'[2] The view is not convincing. There are other places in John's Gospel where the narrator uses an ambiguous term (e.g. ζῶν, 4.10-11, 11.26) which embodies the dynamic between literal and metaphorical meaning.[3] Here the problem is not so much that Nicodemus has failed to understand the meaning of the word ἄνωθεν. Rather, of the two possible meanings, he has chosen the one which reinforces his materialistic interpretation.[4]

That the context itself points to the primary meaning 'from above' is evident also in vv. 6-8. The repetition of ἄνωθεν in v. 7 is framed on either side by reference to τὸ πνεῦμα (vv. 6 and 8): the one is to be understood in terms of the other.[5] Furthermore, the same point is made in the first scene in the reference to the descending Son of Man (v. 13)[6] who comes 'from above' and who will return to the Father. It is clearest however at v. 31a where the same adverb is used in a

arguments based on Aramaic (such as Cotterell, 'Nicodemus', p. 238, and 'Sociolinguistics', pp. 71-72) are irrelevant for this (late) stage of Gospel tradition.

1. Bultmann, p. 135.

2. Schneiders, 'Born Anew', pp. 191-92.

3. See, e.g., ζῶν ὕδωρ, 4.10-11, and ὁ καταβαίνων, 6.33. Barrett (p. 208) gives a list of other terms involving double meaning and misunderstanding.

4. Moloney (p. 110) expresses this type of misunderstanding as the tension between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' meanings: 'Jesus' words to Nicodemus combine both the horizontal experience of time and the vertical experience of the inbreak of God. Nicodemus's response is limited to the horizontal, and he does not even raise the question of seeing the kingdom of God.'

5. Verse 6 parallels 1.12-13 of the Prologue which speaks of birth οὐκ ἐξ αἱμάτων οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος σαρκὸς οὐδὲ ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ (1.12-13). Here the important phrase is ἐκ θεοῦ, synonymous with ἄνωθεν in Jn 3.

6. Nicholson (*Departure*, p. 22) argues that the descending Son of Man is not simply one motif but rather 'provides the Gospel's dynamic.' See also Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 208-20, and R. Maddox, 'The Function of the Son of Man in the Gospel of John', in R.J. Banks (ed.), *Reconciliation and Hope. New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology Presented to L.L. Morris* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1974), pp. 190-203.

context where it can only be translated 'from above'.[1] This is seen in the antithetical parallelism contained in the rest of the verse: the one who is ἐκ τῆς γῆς is distinguished from the one who is ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, in this case ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ being synonymous with ὁ ἄνωθεν (v. 32b).

From this it follows that the whole of John 3 is pervaded by the notion of ἄνωθεν. As Jesus is the one who is, *par excellence*, ὁ ἄνωθεν, so also is the Spirit (vv. 12-13). The origins of both are 'from God' (ἀπὸ θεοῦ, v. 2) and equally mysterious. The same is true for the revelation that Jesus brings (vv. 12-13, 31). Indeed the correspondence between Jesus' origins, his words, and the Spirit is extended also to include Nicodemus. What Nicodemus is offered through the image of birth is precisely a new origin 'from above'.[2] Here we find that ἄνωθεν, in the sense of 'from above', governs the theological framework of John 3 in relation to the nature of God, the coming of Jesus and the gift of life which is offered to believers.

To claim the meaning 'from above' as primary, however, is not to deny the presence of secondary meaning. Ambiguity and *double entendre* in relation to specific words is part of the Gospel's literary technique.[3] Both meanings are necessary to cover the full range of the term. Birth 'from above' can also be said to be a *re*-birth, a second experience of birth which is like and yet unlike the first (v. 6):

> Nowhere does the author choose between the two meanings, understood in a 'heavenly way', or eliminate one. By means of this literary device, John is able to synthesize two fundamental truths of the Christian experience: the believer must be born again, from above.[4]

Therefore a new birth is required in order to enter God's βασιλεία which implies 'une nouvelle manière d'être et d'agir'.[5] But it is also,

1. Neyrey ('John III', p. 123) sees this as part of the clarifying function of vv. 31-36.

2. So Bultmann, pp. 137-38.

3. So Richard, 'Double Meaning', pp. 96-112, esp. pp. 102-104, and D.W. Wead, 'The Johannine Double Meaning', *ResQ* 13 (1970), pp. 106-120, esp. pp. 106-108.

4. Richard, 'Double Meaning,' 103; also Wead, 'Double Meaning,' 106-108.

5. De la Potterie, 'Naître', p. 55. See also Carson, p. 190: 'If Nicodemus, with his knowledge, gifts, understanding, position and integrity cannot enter the promsied kingdom by virtue of his standing and works, what hope is there for anyone who seeks salvation along such lines? Even for a Nicodemus, there must be a radical

indeed fundamentally, of divine origins since 'seul l'Ésprit peut la susciter en nous'.[1]

Explication of the Image and Jesus' Identity. Jesus' explication of the image of birth (Stage 3) begins in v. 5 where ὕδωρ refers metaphorically to the rupture of the amniotic sac in childbirth. Whereas Nicodemus has interpreted γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν as εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ δεύτερον εἰσελθεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι (v. 4), Jesus counteracts this with the phrase γεννηθῆναι ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ πνεύματος, making two points. First he acknowledges that Nicodemus has grasped the basic image (ἐξ ὕδατος). Secondly, with the addition of πνεύματος, he clarifies the metaphor of v. 3, exposing as false the literal meaning assumed by Nicodemus. The image of a mother giving birth—the literal meaning—gives way before the metaphorical sense: the 'labour' of the divine Spirit (1.13). Birth and rebirth are both present in this terse phrase.[2]

The two aspects of the phrase ὕδωρ καὶ πνεῦμα are clarified in the next verse, confirming that 'water and Spirit' refer, respectively, to birth (ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς) and rebirth (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος). Here John sets out the contrasting levels of σάρξ and πνεῦμα (v. 6). The parallel statements are bound together by the image of birth and function in an analogical way: as human birth, so divine birth. More than that, the verse encapsulates the dynamic that exists within metaphor, articulating the two levels of meaning in relation to birth: the literal (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς σάρξ ἐστιν) and the metaphorical (τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος πνεῦμά ἐστιν). On the first level, the level of σάρξ, we are dealing with a material, human reality. On the second level, that of πνεῦμα, material reality is presented to Nicodemus as a symbol of spiritual reality.

Understood in these terms, the narrative points to the limitations of σάρξ, but without engaging in any polemic against it: 'While natural birth is contrasted to divine birth and flesh to spirit, flesh in and of itself is not condemned—but neither can it effect the new birth.'[3] As birth (ἐκ τῆς σαρκός) is the way in which human beings enter

transformation, the generation of new life, comparable with physical birth.'

1. De la Potterie, 'Naître', p. 55.
2. So Pamment, 'John 3.5', p. 190.
3. Thompson, *Humanity*, p. 43. See also Brown, I, pp. 131, 141; Barrett, p. 210; Bultmann, p. 141; and Hoskyns, p. 215.

physical life, so divine birth (ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος) is the way in which human beings enter the βασιλεία of God. This is also the sense in which the phrase τὰ ἐπίγεια is to be understood in v. 12. It refers to those events which are to be seen as 'pointing parabolically to Christ', as against those things which, being 'heavenly', are without parable.[1] Behind vv. 6 and 12, therefore, lies the Prologue of the Gospel: human beings can become τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ only through the incarnation of the Logos, which is to say, only through σάρξ (1.13-14): 'Only in τὰ ἐπίγεια are τὰ ἐπουράνια revealed.'[2]

Now that v. 6 has explained the reference to 'water and Spirit', Stage 3 continues with Jesus reiterating the requirement for birth 'from above' (v. 7). Jesus reassures Nicodemus that his misunderstanding is no longer necessary: the meaning of the mysterious utterance is now unveiled. Nicodemus is encouraged to grasp the symbol of birth and embrace the possibilities for life inherent in it. Verse 7 also points forward to Jesus' further explication of the metaphor. No longer need Nicodemus be amazed (μὴ θαυμάσῃς): the mystery of birth is no less than the mystery of God's presence in the world (v. 8). The reference to πνεῦμα in v. 8 is an example of Johannine double meaning, in which both senses of the word—'wind' and 'spirit'—are present. The same is true of φωνή and πνέω.[3] Based on the *double entendre* of wind and spirit, v. 8 points to the mystery of divine birth and the impossibility of knowing its origins and destiny.[4] Because of their mysterious qualities, both the wind and childbirth are particularly apposite for symbolising the process by which new life is entered. Those who accept the gift of life, who experience rebirth 'from above', become participants in the mystery of the same reality. That is why, in the last sentence of v. 8, the subject returns to the one born of the Spirit, πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος. The statement parallels in positive terms Jesus' opening words to Nicodemus in v. 3: ἐὰν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν. Once again Nicodemus is challenged to experience the new birth, birth from the Spirit. Such a step forward on his part would take the narrative to Stage 4.

1. Barrett, p. 212.

2. W.C. Grese, '"Unless One Is Born Again": The Use of a Heavenly Journey in John 3', *JBL* 107 (1988), p. 692.

3. Richard ('Double Meaning', pp. 101-102, 103) points out that πνέω substitutes for ἐμφυσάς which John uses synonymously at 20.22.

4. See above, pp. 45-46.

As well as being concerned with the image of birth, vv. 1-21 are equally concerned with the revelation of Jesus' identity. Jesus offers Nicodemus new birth 'from above' because he is ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ/ ἄνωθεν, both in his origins and his return to the Father.[1] He has at his disposal τὰ ἐπουράνια (v. 12): 'Jesus, and only Jesus, can reveal the heavenly things.'[2] He provides 'the connecting link between the earthly and heavenly spheres',[3] both through his incarnation (v. 13) and crucifixion (v. 14): 'The descent of revelation is now defined as a descent not merely into human flesh, but into flesh that must die.'[4] The cross is the final act in God's self-giving love, first revealed in the incarnation (v. 16). It is the source and symbol of life, the antitype of the serpent in the desert (v. 14). The point is spelled out in v. 17 where it is clearer than ever that the gift of eternal life ('birth ἄνωθεν') is grounded in Jesus' identity and mission. Only as God's envoy can Jesus offer life to Nicodemus, only as the Son of Man who has descended from heaven and will return there through his 'lifting up' (ὑψωθῆναι) on the cross.[5] The explication of Jesus' identity in such terms is part of the development of Stage 3 of the narrative: to understand the foundational image as a symbol is to understand Jesus also as the definitive symbol of God.

Nicodemus' Response to the Revelation. Now that Jesus has divulged the meaning of birth in symbolic terms, Nicodemus' response becomes an important question for the reader. The response of the central character is an essential aspect of symbolic narrative; he or she is challenged to attain the symbolic meaning which emerges through the

1. Grese ('Heavenly Journey', pp. 677-93) sees the reference to γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν as relating to the motif of a heavenly journey, which unites vv. 1-12 and vv. 13-21; Jesus' heavenly origin is what makes possible the journey to faith for believers.

2. Moloney, *Son of Man*, p. 59.

3. Barrett, p. 212.

4. Hoskyns, p. 206.

5. Moloney (*Son of Man*, pp. 61-62) argues that the context in which ὑψόω is used (in relation to the serpent) and the perfect tense of ἀναβαίνω, show that there is no reference to an ascension; however, the idea of exaltation is implicitly present. See H. Hollis, 'The Root of the Johannine Pun—ὑψωθῆναι', *NTS* 35 (1989), p. 475, who argues that the term 'demonstrates the paradoxical union' between Jesus' death and glorification. Against this, cf. Nicholson, *Departure*, pp. 75-144, who sees the verb as concerned more with Jesus' exaltation than his crucifixion.

narrative (Stage 4). The issue is whether Nicodemus has embraced or rejected Jesus' explication of the image of birth as a symbol for eternal life. Disappointingly, however—for the reader experiences sympathy for Nicodemus[1] and the opening section has aroused the expectation that he will embrace Jesus' invitation—the symbol of birth evokes only the lame question of v. 9: πῶς δύναται ταῦτα γενέσθαι. The full irony of the encounter between the two is revealed in Jesus' rebuke (v. 10): σὺ εἶ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ γινώσκεις. Ironically, the one who has initiated the dialogue, who is a distinguished teacher and theologian, ends up with nothing to say.[2] Whereas in v. 7 Jesus assures Nicodemus that he need not be amazed, now in v. 10 it is Jesus' turn to be amazed. This is emphasised in the emphatic personal pronoun σύ and the designation of Nicodemus as '*the* teacher of Israel'.[3] Nicodemus' response is woefully inadequate.[4] Finally—in this narrative—we are left with the realisation that, despite his religious pedigree, he has understood nothing at all. He is unable to move to a symbolic understanding. Nicodemus' faith, despite its struggle, betrays 'a purely materialistic attitude to the things of the earth'.[5]

Nevertheless, Nicodemus and his plight are not forgotten in the discourse which follows his last words. The shift to a more general focus, along with the earlier reference to a wider group at 2.23-25, suggests that Nicodemus is to be seen as playing a representative role in the narrative.[6] Furthermore, at 3.1 his name is flanked on either

1. So Schneiders, 'Born Anew', pp. 190-91.

2. So Hoskyns, p. 205.

3. Schneiders ('Born Anew', p. 190) says that in the light of Nicodemus' subsequent appearances in the Gospel, this is 'not so much a condemnation as a challenge'.

4. According to Moloney (p. 115) Nicodemus' response is 'a stunned inability to step out of his own categories into the mysterious life in the Spirit which Jesus is offering him.'

5. Hoskyns, p. 217.

6. So R.F. Collins, 'The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel I', *Downside Review* 94 (1976), pp. 36-37, and *'These Things Have Been Written': Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 2; Louvain/Grand Rapids: Peters Press/Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 14-16, 56-67; see also Gnilka, p. 26. That there are sympathetic, though not necessarily believing Pharisees in John's Gospel, is seen in the disputes that arise among them (see 6.52; 7.14-24, 40-44; 9.16; 10.19-21). The second episode involving Nicodemus comes into this category (7.45-52). Cf. J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth*

side by ἄνθρωπος ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων and ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων, and at v. 10 he is designated by Jesus as *the* teacher of Israel (v. 10). Nicodemus, in other words, represents the 'Jewish' leadership, which, at this stage of the Gospel, is still theoretically open to Jesus. The point does not detract from the individuality of Nicodemus here and elsewhere in the Gospel. He is presented both as an individual and as representative of the group to which he belongs (see 7.45-52). It is the wider group that Jesus now addresses. In this sense the discourse (vv. 11-21) acts as a commentary on the dialogue (vv. 1-10). Nicodemus and the Judaism he represents are confronted by the shining of the light and faced with the choice (κρίσις) between life and death, between a literal and a symbolic understanding. Both are confronted by the challenge to believe in Jesus as the one who is ἀπὸ θεοῦ and to experience new birth from the Spirit.

There is still, of course, the problem that there is no narrative ending to the story of Nicodemus, no statement such as 'so Nicodemus departed...'[1] For some, this has suggested that he is merely the '"johannine straightman" whose job it is to ask the silly question' and open the way for Jesus' discourse'.[2] This is not, however, the only interpretation. The actual effect of this lacuna in the narrative is an extraordinary one. As readers, we have already witnessed Nicodemus' struggle to believe; we have identified with him as an individual in his

Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2nd edn, 1979), p. 161, who argues that Nicodemus represents secret believers within the synagogue; also Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 39-41. In the light of 2.23-25 and his final comment at 3.9, it is hard to see Nicodemus as representative of a secret group of believers. It is more likely that the evangelist, in his overall presentation of Nicodemus, wants to demonstrate (in a polemical context) that outright rejection of Jesus on the part of the synagogue is not absolute. It is possible that the Johannine community received a small number of Pharisaic converts, whose struggle and final conversion are reflected in the portrait of Nicodemus. See also Mk 12.28-34 where one of the scribes is won over to Jesus in a highly polemical narrative context.

1. Cf. the story of the Rich Man at Mk 10.17-22/pars., where, after Jesus' challenge to discipleship (10.21), the narrator concludes: ὁ δὲ στυγνάσας ἐπὶ τῷ λογῷ ἀπῆλθεν λυπούμενος, ἦν γὰρ ἔχων κτήματα πολλά (10.22).

2. Nicholson, *Departure*, p. 85; also Meeks, 'Man from Heaven', p. 148. Against this, K. Grayston ('Who Misunderstands the Johannine Misunderstandings?', *Scripture Bulletin* 20 [1989], pp. 9-150) argues correctly that, as readers, we are meant to stand alongside the perplexed and sometimes hostile characters of the Gospel in their misunderstanding.

desire to believe and his misunderstanding. The effect of his silence on the reader, after Jesus' question in v. 10, is to leave open the question of his faith. We leave the narrative of Nicodemus in Stage 3, as he wavers between the two paths which lie before him, caught in the struggle to embrace the symbolic significance of birth 'from above'. His story in vv. 1-21 is left irresolute precisely because it *has* no theological resolution, no commitment of faith. The case of Nicodemus, like his story, lies still in suspense. Not until the end of the Gospel, in the burial of Jesus, does his faith come into the open (19.38-42).[1] Significantly, Nicodemus gains new courage immediately following the flow of blood and water from the side of the crucified Jesus (19.34), which is itself suggestive of birth. There he reaches a symbolic understanding and confesses his faith in action by burying Jesus, which is 'ein Bekenntnis der Tat'.[2] Nonetheless, for the time being, Nicodemus is unable to make the choice; he 'occupies a dangerous position betwixt and between'.[3] Precisely this point is reflected in the irresolution of the first scene and the lack of a narrative conclusion. Nicodemus is the representative of those who

1. According to Schneiders ('Born Anew', p. 191) the reader's sympathy for Nicodemus is vindicated through his action in burying Jesus. The quantity of spices recalls the anointing by Mary of Bethany (12.1-8). It is suggestive also of a royal burial and is part of the motif of 'glory' and 'glorification' which suffuses John's Passion narrative. See Schnackenburg, III, pp. 295-99, and Brown, II, p. 960; also J.S. King, 'Nicodemus and the Pharisees', *ExpTim* 98 (1985), p. 45. The view is contested by those who see the burial of Jesus, along with the massive quantity of spices, as a further example of Nicodemus' misunderstanding. For Meeks ('Man from Heaven', p. 149) Nicodemus's 'ludicrous 'one hundred pounds' of embalming spices indicate clearly enough that he has not understood the "lifting up" of the Son of Man'; also Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, p. 40, and D.D. Sylva, 'Nicodemus and His Spices (John 19.39)', *NTS* 34 (1988), pp. 148-51. De Jonge ('Nicodemus', p. 343) argues that at 7.50-52 Nicodemus is concerned, not to defend Jesus' teaching, but with the requirements of the law (p. 345); for him, Nicodemus still remains as εἷς...ἐξ αὐτῶν (7.50). See also J. Bassler, 'Mixed Signals: Nicodemus in the Fourth Gospel', *JBL* 108 (1989), pp. 635-46, who sees the character of Nicodemus as ambiguous in each of his three appearances in the Gospel, and M. Goulder, 'Nicodemus', *SJT* 44 (1991), pp. 153-68, who argues that John's attitude to Nicodemus throughout the Gospel is 'solidly negative' (p. 153).

2. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 188. Leidig sees 3.1-21 as containing only the first three stages of the faith conversations, the fourth ('Bekenntnis zum Heilbringer') being reached at 19.39 (pp. 184-88).

3. So Hoskyns, p. 211.

are unable to move beyond their struggle for understanding to the resolution of faith.

Scene 2: John the Baptist—Stages 4 and 5 (vv. 22-30)

Quite apart from his representative role, and the way the narrative reflects Nicodemus' own irresolution, there is another reason for taking the experience of Nicodemus seriously: namely, in relation to John the Baptist (scene 2). The resumption of the discourse at vv. 31-36, as we saw at the beginning, is part of the 'frame' which surrounds the Baptist's witness (vv. 22-30). What is the function of this scene in terms of the Stages of the narrative? The clue is given in the title ῥαββί with which the Baptist's disciples address him in v. 26. In John the Baptist we have another example of one who, like Nicodemus, is a 'teacher in Israel'. A comparison is set up between Nicodemus and John—both teachers within Judaism, both men of power and influence, and both challenged in different ways by the advent of the Johannine Jesus. The contrast is personal and, on a deeper level, symbolic: what is impossible for Nicodemus in his story is achieved through the testimony of the Baptist in both word (vv. 28-30) and action (v. 23).

From this it follows that John the Baptist's image of the bridegroom in v. 29 is not so much a statement of personal humility, as a radical awareness of the ending of the old era (symbolised by John's water baptism) and the coming of the new (symbolised by Jesus' Spirit baptism). The image of waxing and waning in v. 30 relates to the relationship between the two 'religions'. In Johannine terms, John the Baptist is able to make the transition from Judaism to the christian community. He witnesses to the passing of the former and confesses the superiority of Jesus in relation to the latter. As we have seen, the image of birth is implicitly present, linked to the explicit reference to baptism: both are concerned with initiation into the new life of faith. John makes the transition from the old to the new, taking the narrative through Stages 4 and 5 while Nicodemus despite his struggle cannot let go of the old.

The point can be seen more sharply if we compare the last words of each character in this narrative: John the Baptist's words of insight and confession (vv. 29-30) stand over against the helplessness of

Nicodemus' question (v. 9).[1] Indeed not only does the Baptist make the transition to the new community, he himself (humanly speaking) effects that transition. It is his voice which is heard bearing witness before ever Jesus sets foot on the Gospel stage (1.15). He is the bridge between Judaism and the believing community, representing that part of Judaism which responds wholeheartedly to the advent of Jesus. For the evangelist, he stands in the line of Old Testament figures such as Moses and Abraham who point to Jesus as the definitive revelation of God. Nicodemus, on the other hand, stands for those within Judaism who, though sympathetic, are unable to make the transition. Where he is still caught in the struggle between light and darkness, John represents the human point of transition, the total and joyful embracing of the light.[2] In terms of the birth image, he acts, as it were, as midwife to usher in the new life. He is the one who stretches out his arms to the new even as he vanishes along with the old.[3]

On this basis, it is both appropriate and necessary for the narrative that scene 2 with John the Baptist follows directly from scene 1. Far from rejecting the light, the Baptist is sent precisely in order to witness to its presence in Jesus (ἵνα μαρτυρήσῃ περὶ τοῦ φωτός,1.8). The portrayal of John the Baptist in vv. 22-30, therefore, acts as a foil to the character of Nicodemus. John is co-opted by the narrator to reveal by contrast the nature of an authentic faith response. His baptising (vv. 23-27) demonstrates his symbolic awareness of the

1. Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 282-84, who also perceives a comparison between the two men, argues that the faith response of John the Baptist is necessary to complete the narrative.

2. Wilson ('Integrity', pp. 37-38) sees a parallel between Jesus and the Baptist which is basic to the unity of Jn 3. Just as vv. 1-21 comprise a discourse by Jesus involving dialogue (with Nicodemus), so also vv. 24-36 comprise a discourse by John the Baptist involving dialogue (with the Baptist's disciples); vv. 22-23 act as the literary bridge between the two. This is an ingenious solution to the problems of the narrative, but gives little place to the character of Nicodemus or the centrality of the birth image. Furthermore, the parallelism between vv. 1-21 and vv. 24-36 is at points stretched: e.g. it is hard to see how John's disciples parallel the role of Nicodemus. Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, pp. 54-61) sees the contrast as lying between two communities: that of Nicodemus (secretly believing christians within the synagogue) and that of followers of the Baptist.

3. Augustine, *Tract. In Jo.* xiii.12, says of John the Baptist here: 'Ego sum in audiendo, ille in dicendo; ego sum enim illuminandus, ille lumen; ego sum in aure, ille verbum.' See Brown, I, p. 156.

necessity of birth 'from above' and of the identity of Jesus (Stage 4). His final confession in vv. 28-30 (Stage 5) is made in opposition to the central character Nicodemus, from whom as readers we might expect it. John the Baptist, though he plays a secondary role in the narrative here, exposes the inadequacy of Nicodemus' response and makes the transition and confession of faith which ought properly to belong to Nicodemus.

Scene 3: Summary of Narrative (vv. 31-36)

The contrast between the two men in the levels of their faith is made clearer in vv. 31-36 which bring together the threads of the narrative. Verse 32 recalls the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus: it is a restatement, in slightly different wording, of Jesus' rebuke in v. 11. In spite of Jesus' intimate knowledge of God affirmed in Nicodemus' opening words (v. 2), the story of Nicodemus in vv. 1-21 does not move beyond Stage 3 to his acceptance of the revelation. Along with the Judaism he represents, he cannot grasp symbolically the offer of light and life. This underlines the necessity and human impossibility of birth 'from above': human beings cannot of themselves attain such understanding. At the same time, vv. 31-32 relate to John the Baptist. Although he is 'of the earth' (in contrast to Jesus who is ὁ ἄνωθεν ἐρχόμενος),[1] John witnesses faithfully to the superiority of the one who can 'speak from knowledge of heavenly things'.[2] Whereas the story of Nicodemus is left in suspense, John the Baptist's story effects the last two narrative Stages. John confesses his faith and reveals himself as one who is truly born 'from above'. In the movement of the narrative through Stages 4 and 5, John represents a Judaism which recognises its need for self-transcendence. Nicodemus, on the other hand, suggests a Judaism which, though sympathetic, wants to preserve its own absolute identity. From the Gospel's perspective, the danger is that Nicodemus and the Judaism he represents will remain on a material level, unable to make the transition ('birth') to a symbolic understanding through the advent of Jesus.

The concluding verses also summarise the basic themes of the narrative for the reader (vv. 34-36). The notion of birth 'from above',

1. Hoskyns (p. 224) comments of John the Baptist: 'earth provides him with the matter of his speech and action; his voice is a cry (1.23), and his baptism is by water only.'

2. Plummer, p. 111.

which is echoed here, has been established through the narrative as a symbol for the gift of the Spirit (v. 34). In the final verse, the 'crisis' of the coming of the light—the choice between light and darkness, salvation and judgment—is set before the reader, as it was set before Nicodemus (vv. 18-21). The reader is drawn into the symbolic narrative and invited to respond. Reader response, however, is not effected through the faith of the leading character, but rather in the challenge to move beyond Nicodemus' indecision. It is the witness of John the Baptist which enables the reader to realise the full meaning of an appropriate faith response. The Baptist's faith opens the way for her to embrace the symbol of birth and succeed where Nicodemus—at least in this narrative—has failed.

D. *Conclusion*

John 3 is not perhaps the best example of John's symbolic narratives. It has a number of rough edges from a literary perspective and it lacks the narrative and theological coherence of many of the later narratives.[1] Nevertheless, though awkward at points, the theological and narrative intentions of the text are discernible. John 3 functions as a unitive narrative and as such it contains the five Stages of symbolic narrative, though in an unusual way. The narrative begins with the image of birth 'from above' (v. 3) which becomes, through the dialogue, a symbol for entry into eternal life. The 'labour' of the Spirit which this involves is seen in the character of Nicodemus, who

1. In terms of tradition history, there is a possibility that Jn 3 represents an earlier attempt by the evangelist to develop an appropriate narrative style. The phenomenon of the long narratives, as opposed to the shorter stories of the Synoptic tradition, is surely in large part the creative work of the evangelist, who developed these out of shorter narratives within the traditions of his community. Such a development would allow him to explore in depth the faith response of the leading characters. If this is the case, we can see a growth in the level of sophistication from one narrative to another. Jn 3 is not as well developed, from a literary perspective, as for example Jn 4.1-42. The point is even stronger in the case of Jn 5 (see below, Chapter 4, pp. 107-108). All this supports theories which argue for more than one edition of the Gospel. As is the case with redaction critical studies of John, however, the difficulty lies in finding agreement on specific texts. For an imaginative but plausible reconstruction of the pre-history of the Johannine community, see R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple. The Life, Loves and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

struggles yet is unable to move from a literal to a metaphorical understanding. Jesus reveals himself to Nicodemus as the definitive symbol of God, the descending Son of Man who offers, through his incarnation and death, God's own life. Nicodemus represents the religious leadership of Judaism which, for all its learning in the Hebrew Scriptures (v. 10), is unwilling, in the evangelist's view, to reinterpret them symbolically in the light of Jesus.

John the Baptist, on the other hand, is able to make the transition ('birth') from the old life to the new and summons his disciples to do likewise. He acts as a foil to Nicodemus, sharpening the irony of the latter's inability, as ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, to comprehend Jesus' utterances. The Baptist's understanding and confession of faith take the place of Nicodemus' lack of understanding. Nicodemus, who ought to make the confession, cannot move from a material to a metaphorical understanding of birth; he neither accepts it nor rejects. The indecision of the leading character is the obstacle which hinders the story of Nicodemus from reaching its final two Stages; it is not Nicodemus who succeeds in being 'born from above' but John the Baptist. Although there are echoes of the birth image throughout John 3, it is significant that explicit reference to the symbol ceases at the point where the dialogue with Nicodemus ends (v. 10). This is because symbol and narrative belong together. In later narratives, we will see more clearly how the narrator breaks open the meaning of the central symbol in the experience of the main character.

Role of σάρξ and πνεῦμα

One important feature of the narrative of John 3, in spite of its difficulties, is that it succeeds in highlighting the theological function of symbol in its Johannine framework. On the one hand Jesus asserts unequivocally the helplessness of σάρξ in effecting the new birth. It can only take place through the mysterious workings of πνεῦμα (vv. 6-8). On the other hand σάρξ has an important role to play; the evangelist does not pose here an ontological dualism between σάρξ and πνεῦμα. On the contrary, the role of σάρξ is an essential one in the narrative, as is apparent in the symbol of birth. Belonging to the domain of σάρξ, it is at the same time revelatory of πνεῦμα, to such an extent that πνεῦμα can only be apprehended through its narrative and symbolic role. The Judaism with which the narrative of John 3 is concerned is therefore important in its capacity to point symbolically

to Jesus. Where it fails to do so it belongs finally to the realm of σάρξ. Where it achieves the symbolic transition it shows its true openness to the revelation of the divine πνεῦμα in Jesus (v. 27)

This gives an important perspective to the meaning of v. 12. Human beings are incapable of comprehending τὰ ἐπουράνια, since God is invisible and unknowable (1.18). It is only through τὰ ἐπίγεια or σάρξ that human beings can experience new life 'from above'. Through the incarnation of the divine Logos, all flesh now has the possibility of entering into the fullness of divine life. According to John 3, it is through birth as a symbol representing a 're-orientation, a new creative beginning'[1] that believers find life and receive a new origin (characterised as ἄνωθεν) to become God's children (1.12-13). In this way, the reader of the Gospel is challenged through the symbol of birth to encounter imaginatively the divine πνεῦμα and so move, through the Stages of the narrative, from darkness to the light of life.

1. Hoskyns, p. 203.

Chapter 3

JOHN 4.1-42: THE STORY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

The story of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman, and through her with a Samaritan village (4.1-42), is one of the clearest examples of symbolic narrative in the Fourth Gospel. It has a more obvious literary coherence than the narrative of Nicodemus in John 3 but without the internal difficulties and points of awkwardness. The main role is played by Samaritans but there is a second narrative stream in the role of the disciples who act as a foil to the Samaritan woman and the villagers. In rhetorical terms, the narrative has little discourse material and consists of four dialogues between Jesus and the woman (vv. 7-26), between the woman and the villagers (vv. 28-29, 42), between Jesus and his disciples (vv. 31-38), and between Jesus and the villagers (vv. 40-41). All of these are bound thematically by the motif of mission, which is the theological heart of the narrative.[1] Above all, the dialogues are carefully constructed around a series of images—water, sacred place, food/harvest—which take on metaphorical value throughout the narrative. Like the image of birth in John 3, these images are drawn from material reality and human experience, and become, through the appropriate Stages of the narrative, symbols of eschatological life.[2]

As in the case of Nicodemus, the narrative of the Samaritan woman's meeting with Jesus is primarily a story about faith. In Jn 4.1-42, the whole is bound together by the progressive movement of faith

1. See the important study of T. Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4.1-42* (WUNT, 31; Tübingen: Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988).

2. O'Day (*Revelation*, pp. 51, 90-92, and 'Narrative Mode', pp. 666, 668) interprets the narrative of 4.4-42 through its irony. While irony is present, symbol is a more inclusive and illuminating category for understanding this narrative.

through the Samaritan encounter with Jesus, in which each of the five Stages, carefully crafted by the narrator, leads to the climax of the story in the faith-confession of the villagers (v. 42). This literary goal holds the images together and gives them their symbolic significance. At the same time, the story of the Samaritan woman is also the faith story of the readers of the Gospel who are captivated by the drama and, through subjective involvement, challenged with the inconceivable gift of life that Jesus offers. In this sense, faith is not just another aspect of symbolic narrative but rather its purpose, as it is of the whole Gospel (20.31).[1]

The narrative is skilfully woven into the fabric of the Gospel. It is the second last episode in the 'Cana to Cana' section (2.1–4.54),[2] in which the evangelist deals with entry into the new order of things (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) and the obstacles which hinder or prevent it. In particular, the narratives of John 3 and 4.1-42 belong together, bound by the common themes of water,[3] Spirit and witness. There is also an implied contrast between Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman:[4] the male, 'orthodox' Jewish teacher and theologian who has name, status and respectability (3.1), stands over against the female, heterodox Samaritan who is without name or status. While Nicodemus comes voluntarily to Jesus by night (νυκτός, 3.2) and makes no decision for faith, the woman meets Jesus involuntarily in the broad light of day and comes to an understanding of faith.[5] The energy and eagerness of the woman's response to Jesus (4.28-29) contrasts with the powerlessness of Nicodemus' response (3.9). He, as a representative of Judaism makes no impact on his fellow-Pharisees (see 7.45-52), while she,

1. Boers ('Discourse Structure', p. 174) describes 4.1-42 as 'a myth, a narrative symbol, which engages the reader'. See above, Introduction, pp. 11-12.

2. See Brown, I, pp. 195-96; also F.J. Moloney, 'From Cana to Cana (John 2.1–4.54) and the Evangelist's Concept of Correct (and Incorrect) Faith', *Salesianum* 40 (1978), pp. 817-43.

3. So Barrett, p. 228, and Lightfoot, p. 121.

4. Bultmann, p. 176, describes John 4.1-42 in relation to John 3 as the 'other side of the diptych'. See also M.M. Pazdan, 'Nicodemus and the Samaritan Woman: Contrasting Models of Discipleship', *BTB* 17 (1987), pp. 145-48, who regards the Samaritan woman as a model of 'mature discipleship' while Nicodemus represents 'initial discipleship' (p.148). See also Schnackenburg, I, p. 419; Collins, 'Representative Figures 1', pp. 39-40; Carson, p. 216; and Westcott, p. 67.

5. See C. Koester, 'Hearing, Seeing and Believing in the Gospel of John', *Bib* 70 (1989), pp. 333-36, esp. p. 333.

representing her fellow-Samaritans, brings the entire village to Jesus (4.30, 39). Ironically, the Samaritan woman comes to be more closely identified with John the Baptist (3.22-30) than does Nicodemus.[1] Like the Baptist, she recognises the presence of the bridegroom and bears witness to the light; like him, she too can be said to 'decrease, that he might increase' (cf. 3.30 and 4.42).

A. *Structure and Overview*

Jn 4.1-42 divides itself neatly into three scenes, with the opening verses setting the scene for the narrative (vv. 1-6). Each scene is centred on an image: ὕδωρ ζῶν (vv. 7-15), τόπος (vv. 16-29 [30]), and βρῶσις, βρῶμα/θερισμος (vv. [30] 31-42). Verses 27-30 belong in scene 2 rather than scene 3,[2] thus creating an *inclusio*: the woman responds to Jesus' request in v. 16 by returning not with just one man but a whole village (v. 30).[3] With this structure, we can identify a common pattern in each of the three scenes:

(a) a request or invitation is given by Jesus in the aorist imperative (δος, v. 7; ὕπαγε φώνησον, v. 16; φάγε, v. 31);[4]
(b) Jesus makes a statement which, in some way, overturns this request (vv. 10, 17-18, 32);
(c) the leading character makes an initial response to Jesus' statement (vv. 11 [9], 19-20, 33);
(d) Jesus offers christological revelation (vv. 11-14, 21-26, 34-38);
(e) the leading character makes a faith response (vv. 10, 28-29, 39-42—in each case intensifying to a climax).[5]

1. The relationship between the baptism of John and that of Jesus (4.1-2) follows from John 3 (vv. 22-26, p. 31) and is another link between the two chapters.

2. So Moloney, p. 156. Against this, cf. Brown, I, p. 181-84; Schnackenburg, I, p. 442-54; and Lindars, pp. 192-198.

3. See H. Boers, *Neither on the Mountain nor in Jerusalem: A Study of John 4* (NBL; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 192.

4. O'Day, *Revelation*, pp. 53-54, also sees the two commands at v. 7 and v. 16 as section markers.

5. See also Brown, I, pp. 166-68, 176-85, whose schema for the narrative is based on patterns of drama. J. Bligh ('Jesus in Samaria', *HeyJ* 3 [1964], pp. 329-31) and Ellis (pp. 66-76) regard the narrative as chiastic.

The unity of the narrative, which is obvious from its rhetorical structure, is apparent also in the way that everything takes place around the well. Jesus' location at the well is the dramatic pivot of the narrative. He is the fixed point, while others come and go: the disciples leave and return (vv. 8, 27), the woman arrives, leaves and returns (vv. 7, 28-30, 42),[1] the villagers arrive and remain with Jesus for two days (vv. 30, 39-40). All the action takes place around the figure of Jesus seated at the well, giving a priority to the image of 'living water'. Even where the imagery changes, the well as an image is implicitly present, making its presence felt in subtle ways. In form critical terms, the narrative belongs to the *Gattung* of biblical 'betrothal narratives', which are centred on a meeting (usually romantic) at a well.[2] The Johannine narrator, however, recasts the form in a fairly extensive way,[3] while retaining the central metaphorical feature of the well. Thus the well, with its abundant supply of water, serves to hold together the narrative as a literary unit.

Setting *Jesus Comes to a Samaritan Well 4.1-6*

Scene 1: *Jesus' First Dialogue with a Samaritan Woman at the Well.*

Living Water 4.7-15

(a) Request of Jesus for water, vv. 7-8
(b) Overturning statement: Jesus offers water, v. 10
(c) Initial response by woman, vv. 9, 11

1. That the woman returns is implied in the narrative by the leaving of her water jar (v. 28) and the response of the villagers to her at v. 42.

2. See Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, pp. 51-62, who identifies five elements in this form (see Gen. 24.10-61, 29.1-20; Exod. 2.15b-21; also 1 Sam. 9.11-12). Against this, cf. Lindars, pp. 179-80, and Okure, *Mission*, pp. 89-90. Olsson (*Structure and Meaning*, pp. 162-73) sees behind 4.1-42 a Jewish belief in '*a supernatural well which accompanied the Israelites throughout the desert journey*'.

3. E.g. the Samaritan women is not a young Jewish virgin and no betrothal takes place; the well is not concerned with sexual fertility but is an image of salvation (see Isa. 12.3); Jesus is presented not as bridegroom but as the giver of living water. These points are obscured by those who take the OT form to greater lengths; for example, Léon-Dufour, I, p. 347; Bligh, 'Samaria', p. 332; P.J. Cahill, 'Narrative Art in John IV', *Religious Studies Bulletin* 2 (1982), pp. 41-48; C.M. Carmichael, 'Marriage and the Samaritan Woman', *NTS* 26 (1980), pp. 332-46; and L. Eslinger, 'The Wooing of the Woman at the Well: Jesus, the Reader and Reader-Response Criticism', *Journal of Literature and Theology* 1 (1987), pp. 167-83. Duke (*Irony*, pp. 101-103) sees a situation of 'extended irony' arising out of the 'betrothal narrative' form.

(d) Revelation by Jesus, vv. 11-14
(e) Faith response of woman, v. 15

Scene 2: *Jesus' Second Dialogue with the Woman at the Well.*

Sacred Place 4.16-29/30
(a) Request of Jesus that woman bring her husband, v. 16
(b) Overturning statement: Jesus reveals her life, vv. 17-18
(c) Initial response by woman, vv. 19-20
(d) Revelation by Jesus, vv. 21-26
(e) Faith response of woman, vv. 27-29

v. 30: Bridge between scenes 2 and 3 *Coming of Samaritans*

Scene 3: *Jesus' Encounter with Other Samaritans at the Well.*

Food / Harvest 4.30/31-42.
(a) Request of disciples that Jesus eat, v. 31
(b) Overturning statement: Jesus has other food, v. 32
(c) Initial response by disciples, v. 33
(d) Revelation by Jesus, vv. 34-38
(e) Full faith response of Samaritan villagers, vv. 39-42

The overall structure of the narrative may be examined in more detail.

Setting and Scene 1: First Dialogue with Samaritan Woman (vv. 1-15)
(a) Finding it necessary to avoid the suspicion of the Pharisees (vv. 1-2), Jesus leaves Jerusalem and travels through Samaritan country (vv. 3-4) *en route* for Galilee.[1] Weary and thirsty,[2] he breaks his journey at Jacob's well near a Samaritan village (vv. 5-6a), the time being midday, the hottest part of the day (v. 6b,c).[3]

(b) A Samaritan woman arrives at the well to draw water and Jesus initiates the conversation by asking for a drink (v. 7). Jesus is left alone while the disciples go to the village to buy food (v. 8).

(c) The woman is surprised at Jesus' request and the narrator

1. There is a suggestion of divine necessity in the word ἔδει (see δεῖ at Mk 8.31); so Kysar, p. 62, and Beasley-Murray, p. 59.

2. Okure (*Mission*, pp. 86, 105) interprets Jesus'thirst and hunger (vv. 31-33) as characteristic of the missioner who puts herself or himself at the divine disposal and is willing to suffer for the sake of the mission (see 19.28).

3. There is no suggestion that the woman has come at the unusual hour of midday because of her marginal social status. It is necessary for the narrative that the woman comes alone (and that Jesus too is alone); see Okure, *Mission*, p. 87.

explains[1] that Jews and Samaritans are not on social terms (v. 9).[2]

(d) Jesus now reverses the roles of giver and receiver (v. 10) and the woman begins to puzzle over Jesus' unexpected offer of water, comparing it with the gift of the well from her ancestor Jacob (v. 12).

(e) Finally she asks for Jesus' gift of water (v. 15).

Scene 2: Jesus' Second Dialogue with Woman (vv. 16-30)

(a) Jesus requests that the woman return with her husband (v. 16). The transition to scene 2 is, at least to modern eyes, not particularly smooth. The request, however, is an effective narrative device to move the dialogue to its next phase.

(b) Unexpectedly, Jesus reveals his knowledge of the woman's marital situation (vv. 17-18). Recognising that she is dealing with a prophet (v. 19),[3] the woman raises the cultic issue that divides Jews and Samaritans: that of sacred place (τόπος).[4]

(c) Jesus does not answer the question directly but speaks instead of a new relationship with God and a new mode of worship, and in this context reveals his true identity (vv. 21-26).[5]

1. There is some textual evidence for the omission of v. 9b (e.g. a* D and Old Latin witnesses); see BDF §193.5. The internal as well as external evidence, however, supports its inclusion. The narrator often explains Jewish customs or Semitic words for Gentile readers (see 1.38, 41, 42; 5.2; 9.7; 11.18; 18.13, 28; 19.13, 17, 31). Furthermore, as we will see, the explanatory comment plays an important narrative role.

2. According to D. Daube ('Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: The Meaning of συγχράομαι', *JBL* 69 [1950], pp. 137-47) συγχράομαι means 'use together with', supplying 'vessels'as the object. This relates to the perpetual menstrual uncleanness of Samaritan women in Jewish eyes; see *m. Nid.* 4.1. It is clumsy that such an object should need to be supplied (so Haenchen, I, pp. 1219-220); furthermore, the sentence speaks of Samaritans generally. A simpler translation is 'have commercial dealings with', implying that Jewish relations with Samaritans in regard to eating and drinking are the same as for Gentiles. See BAGD, p. 775 (2); Lindars, p. 181; and D.R. Hall, 'The Meaning of συγχράομαι in John 4,9', *ExpTim* 83 (1972), pp. 56-57.

3. See Schnackenburg, I, p. 434, and Barrett, p. 236.

4. See Jn 15.1-6 for a similar use of geography as an image of relationship.

5. The Samaritans did not expect a Davidic Messiah but a *Ta'eb* (one who restores or returns) associated with teaching rather than kingship; see Lindars, p. 187; J. Macdonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 216-17, 353-61, 443; and M.F. Collins, 'The Hidden Vessels in Samaritan Traditions', *JSJ* 3 (1972), pp. 97-116. It is probable that this can be

(d) The disciples return and the woman, in response to Jesus' self-revelation (and the silent disapproval of the disciples, v. 27[1]), runs home leaving behind her water jar.

(e) She discloses her experience to the other Samaritans and begins to return with them to the well (vv. 27-30).

Scene 3: Jesus' Encounter with Other Samaritans (vv. 30-42)

(a) The coming of the Samaritans (vv. 30 and 39-42) provides a literary frame that encloses Jesus' discourse with the disciples; it indicates that the one is to be understood in terms of the other.[2]

(b) The disciples invite Jesus to eat the food they have bought in the village (v. 31; see v. 8). He overturns their expectations by announcing that he already has food to eat (v. 32).

(c) The disciples begin to wonder whether someone else has already fed him (v. 33). Jesus responds by speaking of his mission through the image of harvest, while at the same time, unbeknownst to the disciples, the Samaritan villagers are approaching (vv. 30, 35-38).

(d) The arrival of the villagers, and their encounter with Jesus, is the climax of the narrative (vv. 39-42).[3]

(e) They respond in full faith, acknowledging Jesus as ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (v. 42).

B. *John 4.1-42 as Symbolic Narrative*

In order to see how the story operates as symbolic narrative, we begin by examining the way in which both dialogue and action arise out of the imagery. This, as we saw in John 3, is a major literary feature of the symbolic narratives and is luminously apparent in the long narrative of 4.1-42. The images—particularly that of the well—are

linked to the woman's expectation of one who would 'explain all things'in v. 25 (also v. 39).

1. Just as earlier in the narrative the woman is surprised at Jesus' breaking of racial and social conventions, so now the disciples are shocked at Jesus' transgression of sexual norms; see *m. 'Abot* 1.5.

2 See 3.11-36 and 18.15-27; also Mk 2.1-12; 5.21-43; 6.7-32; 11.12-25; and 14.53-72.

3. It may seem strange to describe the acclamation of the Samaritans in vv. 39-42 as the faith response of the third scene, especially since the dialogue in vv. 31-38 concerns the disciples, not the villagers. In fact, as we will see, the Samaritans are central to the dialogue which takes place between Jesus and the disciples.

established and developed in such a way through the narrative that they take on a symbolic quality. The purpose of the symbolism is not to enhance the narrative with decorative effect, but, in a more elemental way, it is responsible for creating the narrative. Without the images there is no dialogue, no misunderstanding and no movement in faith. In literary terms, the imagery takes the reader from one plane of reality (the material) to another (the eternal), from one way of perceiving the world to another that is radically different. In 4.1-42, this movement happens (as in the case of John 3) through misunderstanding, in five basic Stages.[1]

Scene 1: Living Water—Stages 1 to 3 (vv. 7-15)

In the first scene, the foundational image of water (the well) is established in the opening exchanges of the narrative (vv. 7-10). Jesus, as we have seen, takes the initiative in raising the issue of water and asking for a drink (v. 7), just as he does with Nicodemus in raising the image of birth (3.3). Ignoring for the time being the woman's initial objection (v. 9), he reverses in v. 10 the roles of giver and receiver set up in v. 7 so that *he* becomes the water-giver and *the woman* the one who is thirsty. At this point the symbolic narrative begins: Jesus reveals himself as the giver of living water (Stage 1).

Jesus' utterance in v. 10 is a metaphor structured around three key elements: the giver of water (καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν σοι), the gift of water (ὕδωρ ζῶν) and the one who is thirsty for water (σὺ ἂν ἤτησας αὐτόν).[2] It reveals the way in which the image of water is bound up with the question of Jesus' identity: here, as elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel, symbolism and christology are inseparable. Even the protasis of the sentence (εἰ ἤδεις τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ) hints that Jesus' offer has deeper significance; clearly it is linked to issues of revelation, knowledge and identity. The woman so far has not recognised the nature and reality of giver or gift, nor her own need of it. However, her understanding is, at least initially, impeded by the ambiguity of the phrase ὕδωρ ζῶν. Two meanings for the participle ζῶν present themselves to her. She chooses the literal meaning,

1. On misunderstanding and its relationship to the two theological levels of the Gospel, see the summary in L. Schottroff, 'Johannes 4.5-15 und die Konsequenzen des johanneischen Dualismus', *ZNW* 60 (1969), pp. 206-208. As Schottroff points out, the characters 'missverstehen nicht versehentlich, sondern sie verstehen auf einer falschen Ebene, auf der Ebene der Realitäten der Menschenwelt' (p. 207).

2. See O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 63.

'flowing' water (as opposed to the still water of the well), impervious as yet to the symbolic meaning of 'life-giving' water, the water that gives eternal life.[1]

Stage 2 begins with the woman assuming the literal meaning of the phrase (v. 11), thus demonstrating her misunderstanding. In this respect she is like Nicodemus, who misinterprets the meaning of ἄνωθεν (3.4): both are operating on a material level. Because the woman lacks knowledge of either the giver, the gift or her own thirst, she fails to perceive the metaphorical import of the saying. Again like Nicodemus, she perceives the absurdity of Jesus' proposition if taken at the literal level: κύριε, οὔτε ἄντλημα ἔχεις καὶ τὸ φρέαρ ἐστὶν βαθύ· πόθεν οὖν ἔχεις τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν; (v. 11). In accordance with the second Stage, the woman's incredulity at the idea of Jesus as a giver of water betrays misunderstanding, yet is also important for disclosing the metaphorical meaning. In other words, it is an entirely necessary step. Here we see the collapse of the literal or primary meaning which opens the way to a second level of understanding.

This is precisely what happens in the following verse (v. 12): the narrative begins to move to Stage 3 as the woman seeks a second level meaning to make sense of Jesus' utterance in v. 10. This happens both in relation to Jesus and the gift of water that he offers. In struggling to understand the meaning, the possibility occurs to the woman that Jesus may be claiming to be a well-giver like Jacob (μὴ σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ιακὼβ, ὃς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν τὸ φρέαρ...).[2] Like other Johannine characters in this Stage of the narrative, she resorts to her own religious traditions to provide an answer. Such a level of understanding is, however, fraught with ambiguity. Old Testament figures such as Jacob, or images like the well, are susceptible in the

1. Living water is used in the OT of divine activity, where it refers either to God (e.g. Jer. 2.13 and Pss. 36.9, 42.1) or the Torah (Sir. 15.3); see L. Goppelt, 'ὕδωρ', *TDNT*, VIII, pp. 314-33 and Barrett, pp. 233-34. See also D.C. Allison, 'The Living Water (John 4.10-14; 6.35c; 7.37-39)', *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30 (1986), pp. 144-46, 151-52, and Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 143-47, who notes the OT motifs (see Jer. 2.13b; Ezek. 47.1-12; Zech. 14.8).

2. According to J. Neyrey ('Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4.10-26', *CBQ* 41 [1979], p. 428) Jacob is significant here not just as the giver of water but as 'part of the legitimization of Samaritan traditions of Mt. Gerizim as the place of worship'. This strengthens the link between themes of water and τόπος in vv. 7-15 and vv. 16-26. See also the tradition which Neyrey cites that Jacob's vision occurred on Gerizim (pp. 427-28).

evangelist's world view to two interpretations: either they point typologically and symbolically to Jesus or they fall back into the material realm. The woman's comparison of Jesus to Jacob as a well-giver is therefore ambiguous. In one sense it is apposite, but at the same time it suggests incredulity on her part (μή...). Ironically it is correct: Jesus *is* a well-giver in the tradition of Jacob, and he *is* greater than Jacob.[1] For the narrator, Jacob's gift of the well serves as an antitype to the Johannine Jesus' offer of living water, but the woman has not yet apprehended that.

Once again, and still within Stage 3, the narrative moves forward. Jesus responds to the woman's developing understanding by a second metaphorical utterance in which he clarifies the woman's point concerning the abundance of the well (v. 14).[2] Unlike material water, which is a constant necessity since human thirst is never slaked, the water that is Jesus' gift is wholly and ultimately thirst-quenching.[3] It becomes an internal well of water (7.38)[4] which 'quenches in a radical way the thirst for life'.[5] Here the idea of physical thirst is used as a metaphor for spiritual thirst, signifying the yearning for life in relationship with God. In terms of the two levels of the metaphor, the woman is invited by Jesus to perceive πνεῦμα—spiritual reality—in σάρξ. She is invited to see the material image of water given by her ancestor Jacob as an image for eternal life given by Jesus.

Convinced that Jesus is offering a superior water to that of Jacob's well, the woman now asks for the gift of water (v. 15). On the one hand this represents a significant advance in her understanding: her incredulity at Jesus as a superior giver of water is overcome. On the

1. Schottroff ('Johannes 4.5-15', p. 207) comments that it is typical of the woman to ask the right question yet expect the wrong answer. At v. 11b her question is right, 'denn das Woher Jesu ist der entscheidende Inhalt der Offenbarung', but the answer she expects is magical water from Jacob's well.

2. These verses probably contain an allusion to the tradition of the original miraculous powers of the well; see *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen. 28.10, which speaks of the water of the well bubbling miraculously over the top and providing a source of irrigation. There may be an allusion to this in the participle ζῶν. See Boers, 'Discourse Structure', p. 167, and *Mountain*, pp. 156, 166. See also Neyrey, 'Jacob Traditions', pp. 422-23.

3. Note the use of the aorist subjunctive πίῃ, emphasizing a single action (v. 14).

4. So Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 143.

5. Bultmann, p. 186.

other hand the narrative still remains in Stage 3. The woman is not yet able to grasp the new meaning created by the metaphor. She places Jesus within the same material framework as Jacob: both are water-givers.[1] And so she asks for this gift of water, hoping for a religious miracle that will for ever quench her physical thirst and prevent her having to revisit the well (v. 15c). In so far as she still thinks of material water—however supernatural its source—and physical thirst, the woman misunderstands the symbolic nature of what is offered her:[2] 'she understands that he is speaking of an unusual type of water, but her aspirations are still on the level of earth'.[3] She confuses 'ein innerweltliches Wasser' with the gift of salvation.[4] In Johannine terms, she is still unable to perceive ὁαρχ as a symbol of the divine. Here the first scene ends, with a partial degree of enlightenment on the woman's part, but still within the framework of Stage 3.[5]

Scene 2: τόπος—Stages 3 to 4 (vv. 16-30)

The woman's openness and willingness to learn enables the story to develop as it moves through Stages 3 and 4 of the narrative. Scene 2 reveals the woman's deepening understanding. Her tenacious struggle to understand who Jesus is and the gift that he offers contrasts with the attitude of Nicodemus in John 3. In spite of the greater number of barriers that are to be overcome in her case—she is a woman and a Samaritan, while Nicodemus a Jewish teacher—she at last succeeds in reaching a new level of understanding, beyond that of Nicodemus. Here again the unfolding imagery and the issue of Jesus' identity are interlocked in her developing spirituality.

The vehicle now moves from that of water as a material substance to geography as a material location (especially vv. 20-24). The change of image may seem abrupt in a narrative where we might expect to find a single metaphorical and symbolic focus. Nevertheless, the image

1. Léon-Dufour (I, p. 354) points to the contrast between 'des deux eaux pourtant s'ouvre un espace immense, delui qui sépare la terre et le ciel... La Différence que le dialogue articule ici est double: entre les donateurs de l'eau—Jacob ou Jésus—et entre les effets respectifs de leur don.'

2. Brown (I, pp. 177-78) points out that here she fulfills the first part of Jesus' challenge in v. 10 (the second part is fulfilled after v. 26).

3. Brown, I, p. 177.

4. See Schottroff, 'Johannes 4.5-15', pp. 207-208.

5. O'Day (*Revelation*, p. 65) rightly interprets v. 15 as ironical: 'the comprehending reader knows that the woman is making the correct request in spite of herself'.

of the second scene is dependent on the primary image of water/the well in the first scene. The image of water lies behind the revelation of the woman's life-style and the unsatisfactory relationships which have scarred her.[1] Jesus perceives in the search for meaning her need of living water, and discloses the possibility for a new relationship with God which will give her the meaning that is lacking in her life. The geographical image is in this sense a subsidiary one, dependent on the primary symbol of water. It forms part of the woman's struggle for understanding in Stage 3.

If follows, therefore, that the question of the woman's marital status is revealed by Jesus precisely in order to locate, in the restlessness of her relationships, her 'thirst' for life: '(Man) is made aware of the unrest in (his) life, which drives (him) from one supposed satisfaction to another, never letting (him) attain the final fulfillment until (he) finds the water of life.'[2] It is important to note, with Bultmann in particular, that the issue is not fundamentally a moral one: 'Her exclamation in v. 19 is not an expression of guilt, but simply a cry of amazement.'[3] Jesus is not concerned with issues of moral purity but is trying to make her 'more receptive to revelation'.[4] These verses function, therefore, not to expose moral guilt but to uncover the pain and unrest of the woman's life. Through the self-knowledge gained by the woman, Jesus is revealed to her as the source of true life, the giver of living water. Through the narrative the symbolism impels the woman, not towards moral rectitude, but towards a transformed understanding of herself and her thirst for life, which, for John, is found only in Jesus, the giver of living water (Stage 4).[5]

1. Bultmann, p. 188.
2. Bultmann, p. 188.
3. Bultmann, p. 188.
4. Schnackenburg, I, p. 432; see also Haenchen, I, p. 221; Kysar, p. 65; and Sanders and Mastin, p. 144.
5. A number of scholars suggest these verses be interpreted allegorically of the idolatry of the Samaritans (2 Kgs 17.29-34; Josephus, *Ant.* xi.288). See Léon-Dufour, I, pp. 362-64; O. Cullmann, 'Samaria and the Origins of the Christian Church. Who Are the ἄλλοι of John 4.38?', in A.J.B. Higgins (ed.), *The Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1956), pp. 187-88; Hoskyns, pp. 242-43; Lindars, pp. 185-87; Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 186, 199, 203; O. Betz, '"To Worship God in Spirit and in Truth": Reflections on John 4.20-26', in A. Finkel, and L. Frizzell (eds.), *Standing before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and Tradition with Essays. In Honor of J. N. Oesterreicher* (New York: Ktav, 1981),

Theological Meaning of 'Water'. The close connection between scenes 1 and 2, and the dominance of the image of water, is seen in the way the images of water and τόπος are linked theologically. Nevertheless, the evangelist does not make clear the precise theological signification of the image of water: is it Jesus' gift of the Spirit or is it the revelation that Jesus brings? A strong case can be made out for either interpretation. For example, the strong overtones of Sophia in Jesus' offer of living water suggests that the gift of water is the revelation that Jesus brings (see Prov. 9.2-5, Sir. 15.3, 24.19-22[1]). As Sophia gives insight and knowledge, so too the Johannine Jesus offers understanding. The moment of revelation in each scene of the narrative, though it involves effort and struggle for the woman (and later the villagers), is ultimately the gift of Sophia who teaches and speaks the truth, leading people to experience life through her revelation.[2] In this sense, the whole of 4.1-42 (and not just the first two scenes) can be interpreted as Jesus-Sophia offering life through divine revelation.[3]

pp. 53-59; Marsh, pp. 208-10, 216; J.D.M. Derrett, 'The Samaritan Woman's Pitcher', *Downside Review* 102 (1984), pp. 252-61; and Cahill, 'Narrative Art', pp. 42-47. The view has serious problems; so Schnackenburg, I, p. 433; Bernard, I, pp. 143-44; Haenchen, I, p. 221; Bultmann, p. 188; Barrett, pp. 235-36; Beasley-Murray, p. 61; and Carson, pp. 232-33. The pagan gods in 2 Kings are all worshipped simultaneously, not sequentially as with the woman's marital relationships. Furthermore, the discussion concerning worship in vv. 20-24 is concerned not with idolatry, but with the narrower issue of cultic site. There is no indication, in Jn 4.1-42 or elsewhere, that Samaritan religion was polytheistic in the first century CE. It was a form of Israelite practice which differed on issues of canon, cultic site and messianic expectation, not monotheism.

1. Sir. 24.19-22 (esp. v. 21) presents as a formal contradiction to Jn 4.14, but is probably saying much the same thing; so Bultmann, pp. 186-87, and M. Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSup, 71; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 117-18. Against this, cf. K.-G. Sandelin, *Wisdom as Nourisher: A Study of an Old Testament Theme, Its Development within Early Judaism and Its Impact on Early Christianity* (Acta Academiae Aboensis, Humoniora 64, 3; Abo: Abo Akademi, 1986), pp. 178, 180-85.

2. On these and other links with the Sophia-tradition in the Fourth Gospel, see Brown, I, pp. cxxiii-cxxiv, and Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 83-173. On the background to the figure of Sophia and its significance for NT christology, particularly the Gospel of John, see E.A. Johnson, 'Jesus the Wisdom of God: A Biblical Basis for Non-Androcentric Christology', *ETL* 61 (1985), pp. 261-94, esp. pp. 284-89.

3. E.g. Bultmann, pp. 184-85. On the Sophia overtones of this narrative, see Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 184-98.

On the other side, there is an equally strong argument that favours the first interpretation: water as an image of πνεῦμα.[1] The link between 4.1-42 and the narrative of John 3 supports this view. Both passages point to the central role of πνεῦμα in the new order of things. Later in the Gospel, in the context of the feast of Tabernacles, the evangelist makes explicit the link between water/the well (ποταμοὶ... ὕδατος ζῶντος) and the Spirit, following Jesus' invitation to faith:

> ἐάν τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρός με καὶ πινέτω...
> τοῦτο δὲ εἶπεν περὶ τοῦ πνεύματος ὃ ἔμελλον λαμβάνειν οι πιστεύσαντες εἰς αὐτόν·
> οὔπω γὰρ ἦν πνεῦμα, ὅτι Ἰησους οὐδέπω ἐδοξάσθη (7.37b, 39).

Moreover, if water is a symbol for revelation (Sophia), why is there no ἐγώ εἰμι saying included in 4.1-42, along the lines of 6.35?[2] If the meaning relates to πνεῦμα, however, the omission makes sense: Jesus is the giver of the Spirit in giving the water of life, but not directly the content of the gift. In this interpretation also, living water and true worship (see 4.20-24) are both profoundly linked to the Spirit and therefore bind together the first two scenes of the narrative.

What are we to conclude from this? Given the strong arguments on either side, and the multivalence of symbolism, it is probable that both ideas are present in the image of water.[3] After all, John's Gospel reveals a close link between Spirit and revelation (for example, 16.13-15) which suggests that they cannot easily be separated. Water in John's Gospel cannot be narrowed to a single meaning.[4] Like other Johannine symbols its meaning is polyvalent: the water of the well points to the divine πνεῦμα offered by Jesus to the woman as part of the gift of revelation. The image of water, as we have already seen,

1. For this view, see Barrett, pp. 233-34; F.W. Beare, 'Spirit of Life and Truth: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Gospel', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 3 (1987), pp. 113-14, 120; Allison, 'Living Water', p. 152; G. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete in the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 21; and Calvin, p. 91.

2. Against this, cf. D.W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Theologischen Dissertationen, 4; Basel: Friedrich Reinhart Kommissions-Verlag, 1970), p. 85, who believes it is present in an unexpressed metaphor (see the ἐγώ εἰμι of v. 26).

3. So Schackenburg, I, p. 426; Brown, I, pp. 178-79; Léon-Dufour, I, p. 359; and Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 214-18.

4. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 192-95.

underlies the dramatic action of scene 2 and indeed the rest of the narrative.

Elucidation of τόπος. Significantly, it is the woman rather than Jesus who introduces the image of τόπος (vv. 20-24). Based on her perception of Jesus as the one who has miraculously disclosed her thirst for life, she now begins to grope towards a symbolic understanding of Jesus' identity. This too is part of the process of Stage 3. Like other characters at this level of understanding, she concludes that he must be a prophet (see 6.14, 9.17).[1] Verses 19-20 represent an important step forward in the woman's understanding. In the first place, her recognition of Jesus as prophet (v. 19) shows that she has accepted the self-knowledge offered to her by Jesus. Similarly, the theological issue which she raises in v. 20, far from being an attempt to subvert the conversation into less personal channels, is a sign of increased understanding.[2] As is fitting in one who has discovered her need of eternal life, the woman turns her attention to the worship of God. Her spirituality moves appropriately from self-knowledge to the knowledge and worship of God.[3] The woman's perception that the real issue is that of worship is, in Johannine terms, right. It demonstrates that she is moving from a literal to a spiritual understanding. At the same time, the misunderstanding continues: the woman's spirituality is still tied to a spatio-material conception of worship. She does not yet understand who Jesus is, nor his pivotal role in the worship of God. Here again we find tension between a growing understanding and a residual level of misunderstanding.

The struggle for understanding moves the woman to introduce, for

1. It is significant that at 7.37-40 Jesus' invitation (along with John's editorial explanation) is immediately followed by the comment of the crowd, οὗτός ἐστιν ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης (v. 40; see also the Pharisees' rejection of such an identification, v. 52b).

2. Brown's description of the woman as 'mincing and coy' (1.175) is hard to understand in the context of the dialogue, unless the woman's responses are to be taken as evasive and manipulative. A number of commentators take this view: e.g. Bernard, I, p. 145, and Johnston, *Spirit-Paraclete*, p. 47, who describes her as 'shifty and without much spiritual perception'. O'Day (*Revelation*, pp. 67-68) is rightly critical of the 'psychologising' involved in this kind of interpretation, which she sees as 'based on a caricatured view of the "personality" and function of the woman'. See also Boers, *Mountain*, p. 175, and Carson, p. 221.

3. So Calvin, p. 20.

the second time in the narrative (see v. 9), the gulf that divides Jew and Samaritan (v. 20). Jesus' action in asking her for a drink (v. 7) now becomes clear: it points symbolically to the one who overcomes barriers and whose coming signals the dawn of the eschatological age. But the woman has not yet realised that the advent of Jesus has ushered in a new order of reality which transcends racial and gender distinctions. Her misunderstanding is again linked to the literal level. It is an indication that, however far she has moved, the narrative has not yet reached Stage 4. Her awareness is still earth-bound, still dominated by material barriers and distinctions. She does not yet comprehend that the reality which Jesus reveals is the divine reality of πνεῦμα, in which/whom differences of gender and race no longer exclude and divide.

Although she may not understand it, the woman nevertheless has an inkling of the truth. Why else does she raise again the issue of Jewish–Samaritan relations? At v. 15 she knows that the barrier between herself and Jesus has been overcome on the material level. Otherwise, she could never ask a Jewish man for water, doing the very thing which she objects to in Jesus (vv. 7, 9). Now in v. 19 she perceives the same barrier, but on a religious level. She realises, not only that the discussion has moved to a theological level, but that the specific issue of sacred site needs to be addressed if she, a Samaritan woman, is to receive anything more from this Jewish man. Again we see the way in which understanding and misunderstanding coalesce in John's narrative. Unlike his response to Nicodemus (see 3.10), however, Jesus accepts the limited nature of the woman's understanding.[1] In leading her to deeper insight, Jesus plays on the image she has introduced, τόπος (v. 20). He transforms it from a geographical concept to a symbol of eschatological life.[2]

The utterance of Jesus in v. 21, which lies at the centre of scene 2, is again metaphorical: ἔρχεται ὥρα ὅτε οὔτε ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ οὔτε ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις προσκυνήσετε τῷ πατρί. It is perhaps difficult for us to appreciate the metaphor in this statement. By raising

1. The reason for the contrast in Jesus' attitude is articulated at 4.22b: the woman, as a Samaritan, is not expected to know what Nicodemus ought to know.

2. As Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 314) points out, the discussion of Temple and cult belongs to the realm of σάρξ, whereas what Jesus is speaking about is a new type of religious worship which is the 'correlate of birth ἐκ πνεύματος'. See also Westcott, p. 67.

the dividing barrier between Jew and Samaritan (v. 20), the woman has presented Jesus with perfectly reasonable alternatives, the choice between two competing τόποι, two possible locations for the worship of God. Jesus' daring reply in v. 21 makes no sense on the literal level. Worship in the ancient world was generally associated with sacred site; in this respect at least Israel did not differ from its Semitic and Roman-Hellenistic neighbours.[1] For the Johannine Jesus to locate worship apart from sacred site means, at face value, to do away with the notion of worship altogether. Although the word τόπος does not occur in v. 21, it is implicit in the references to location. It acts as the vehicle of the metaphor, with προσκυνήσετε τῷ πατρί as tenor. If worship of the divine implies τοωπο', how then can Jesus say that worship has no such geographical focus? With the breakdown of the literal meaning, the woman must find a second, metaphorical meaning.[2]

Since the literal meaning makes no sense, Jesus continues in the verses that follow to clarify the metaphor (vv. 22-24). In the first place (v. 22), he makes it clear that in denying a specific sacred location for worship, he is not dismissing the Temple in Israel's experience of God; Jerusalem and Gerizim do not belong on the same level. The Temple in Jerusalem, as is clear at 2.13-22 and in the Johannine motif of the great Jerusalem festivals (chs. 5–10), derives its importance from its capacity to point symbolically to Jesus in the same way that Moses, Abraham and Jacob do, and indeed the Hebrew Scriptures in general.[3] No equivalent value is given to Mount Gerizim. Thus, while transcending material distinctions as well as geographical location, Jesus at the same time upholds the symbolic value and priority of the Jewish cult (see also Rom. 1.16).[4] As in the contrast between

1. An exception to this is Stoicism (strictly a philosophical rather than religious system) which held a pantheistic view of the universe and the ubiquity of the divine presence, refusing to locate it within spatial or geographical constraints; see F.H. Sandbach, *The Stoics* (Ancient Culture and Society; London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), pp. 69-94.

2. Boers comments on the dialogue: 'At the most simple level he answers the woman's question, but in so doing he dissolves it; neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem' ('Discourse Structure', p. 175).

3. See R.A. Whitacre, *Johannine Polemic: The Role of Tradition and Theology* (SBLDS, 67; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 58: 'For the author the cult and the Scripture witness to Jesus because he is the ultimate revelation of this same gracious God.'

4. For a history of the exegesis of v. 22, see I. de la Potterie, '"Nous adorons,

Nicodemus and John the Baptist in John 3, what the Johannine Jesus rejects is not Judaism as such, but Judaism which refuses to find its symbolic identity in Jesus.[1]

Jesus' explication continues in v. 23 which is the metaphorical extension of v. 21: ἀλλὰ; ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστιν, ὅτε οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταὶ προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ. Synonymous parallelism between the two verses is strong: the coming hour, the theme of worship, and the Father as the recipient of worship. Also important, however, is the antithetical parallelism between the two locative phrases: οὔτε ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ οὔτε ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις (v. 21), and ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (v. 23). Furthermore, v. 23 adds the words καὶ νῦν ἐστιν—a characteristically Johannine statement of realised eschatology (see also 5.25)—and οἱ ἀληθινοὶ προσκυνηταί, where the adjective ἀληθινός corresponds to its cognate ἀληθεία in the same verse.[2] Here v. 23 expands and clarifies the first part of the metaphor in v. 21. What is now made clear is that, with the advent of the eschatological 'hour' of salvation, the worship of God takes on a radically new dimension.

Theological Meaning of τόπος. By characterising the new eschatological mode of worship as ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, Jesus is challenging the woman's adherence to any one sacred site as the true place of worship, whether Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem. In this way, true worship for the evangelist becomes not meaningless but on the contrary more fully authentic. Sacred space is presented to the woman as a metaphor for worship which is ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (vv. 23-24). What is the meaning of this phrase? Clearly it does not refer to an internal, individualistic spirituality.[3] In John's Gospel, πνεῦμα

nous, ce que nous connaissons, car le salut vient des Juifs." Histoire de l'exégèse et interprétation de Jean 4, 22', *Bib* 64 (1983), pp. 77-85. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 103-33) argues that the verse is central to this section and is 'der Schlüssel für das Verständnis des ganzen Berichts' (p. 103).

1. Whitacre (*Polemic*, pp. 64-68) takes the view that John has a positive perspective on God's revelation in Judaism.

2. This is similar to the parallelism between Jesus' two metaphorical utterances at 3.3 and 3.5, the second being a clarification and expansion of the first in the light of Nicodemus' misunderstanding.

3. See Schnackenburg, I, p. 437: 'A spiritualistic understanding, as though Jesus was contrasting the material place of worship with a purely interior worship of God in the mind of man, is excluded by the concept of πνεῦμα, which... can only

refers to the Spirit, which, as we have seen, is already important for this narrative through the concrete image of living water.[1] The woman is not offered a 'spiritualised' understanding of worship which stands over against the physical, but rather a symbolic one.[2]

That τόπος acts in a symbolic way can be seen elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel. In particular, the Cleansing of the Temple (2.13-22) deals both with the image of τόπος and the meaning of true worship. There John focuses almost exclusively on Jesus' resurrection body (2.21). It is the σῶμα of Jesus, not the Temple in Jerusalem, which is to be the new place of worship (2.19). Rather than a 'spiritualised' form of worship, therefore, John presents an understanding of πνεῦμα which is intimately linked to the body of Jesus, crucified and risen. The Cleansing of the Temple, placed strategically at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, makes the point clearly right from the start: the death of Jesus is closely linked to the destruction of the Temple,[3] out of which, in three days, a new 'sacred site' will be raised in the body of the Risen One (2.19-20).[4]

The same point is made in the Farewell Discourse of the community of faith. In a derivative sense, the church becomes the 'place' of Jesus' incarnate presence in the world after his ascension.[5] Here τὸ πνεῦμα (in the role of ὁ παράκλητος) is linked to the concrete existence of the believing community in the world which the Spirit of Jesus indwells.[6] Thus the narrative of 4.1-42 develops the point, begun in

mean the Spirit of God.' See also E. Schweizer, 'πνεῦμα', *TDNT*, VI, pp. 438-39; Lindars, p. 190; and Léon-Dufour, I, p. 372. Cf. Calvin, p. 100, who interprets v. 22 as a reference to worship in this 'spiritualised' sense.

1. According to Brown (I, p. 180) the phrase ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ is a hendiadys, meaning 'spirit of truth', an epithet which is found elsewhere in the Gospel (τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, 14.17; 15.26; 16.13). See Westcott, p. 73; Léon-Dufour, I, p. 374; and Talbert, p. 115.

2. Barrett (p. 238) points out in this context that 'spirit' in the OT (רוח) is 'life-giving, creative activity' rather than that which stands over against material reality.

3. See also 11.28 and the ironical reference to the destruction of the Temple (τόπος) and the Jewish nation (ἔθνος).

4. Elsewhere in John, σῶμα refers to the dead body of Jesus (19.31, 38 [twice], 40; 20.12); see E. Schweizer and F. Baumgärtel, 'σῶμα', *TDNT*, VII, pp. 1057-1058.

5. See Schneiders, 'Symbolism', pp. 228-32.

6. According to Brown (I, p. 1139) in the Fourth Gospel the Paraclete represents 'the Holy Spirit in a special role, namely, as the personal presence of Jesus in the

the Cleansing of the Temple and continued throughout the Gospel, that the locus of worship lies in a new understanding of the presence and reality of πνεῦμα. For those 'born of the Spirit' (3.8), who live in intimacy of relationship with God, true worship is found no longer in a specific sacred place, but rather through the believing community in whom the Spirit of Jesus abides (14.16-17; 15.26; 16.7, 14-15). Nevertheless, the new mode of worship has a strong sacramental basis in the life of community and is not a 'spiritualised' reality, divorced from material reality.

Movement to Stage 4. The exchange that follows between Jesus and the woman (vv. 25-26) is a clarification of the phrase ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ in christological terms. The woman, we assume, now understands the metaphorical import of τόπος and the narrative begins to move to Stage 4. She realises that Jesus is speaking of an eschatological reality in which τόπος finds its meaning in the advent of the Messiah. She perceives, in other words, the symbolic significance of geographical location and understands that Jewish–Samaritan disputes about sacred site are transcended with the coming of Μεσσίας...ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός (v. 25). At the same time, one further barrier to the woman's understanding remains. While perceiving the metaphorical nature of Jesus' utterances, she has missed the crucial phrase καὶ νῦν ἐστιν (v. 23). She does not yet see the realised nature of πνεῦμα. While she expresses an appropriate eschatological hope, her understanding is mistakenly future-oriented (see 11.24). Jesus responds in v. 26, both to the misunderstanding and to her openness and tenacity.[1] He discloses the realisable nature of her longings in the 'now' of his presence: ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι (v. 26). This is the first occasion in the Gospel where ἐγώ εἰμι is used absolutely.[2]

Christian while Jesus is with the Father'. This definition is helpful in making clear the close theological link between Jesus and the Spirit, although it downplays the strong community dimension of John's pneumatology.

1. See Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 88.
2. On the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings, see below, ch. 5, pp. 126-27.

We now assume, as readers, that the final obstacle has been overcome and the woman has attained a symbolic understanding.[1] Jesus has revealed the meaning of the gift so that she now comprehends, in symbolic terms, τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ and τίς ἐστιν ὁ λέγων σοι...(v. 10). She recognises her own thirst, opening herself to both giver and gift.[2] Whether or not this is the case hinges on two exegetical issues in vv. 27-30: first, why does the woman abandon her water jar in v. 28, and secondly, what is the meaning of her words to the Samaritan villagers in v. 29? I have already argued that vv. 27-29 are best seen as the conclusion of the second scene of the narrative rather than the beginning of the third scene. That they represent the woman's response to the self-revelation of Jesus in v. 26 is clear. What is not so clear is whether this signifies the next stage of the narrative (Stage 4).

The leaving of the water jar (v. 28a) is an important detail, reinforcing the centrality of the well image and recalling Jesus' offer of living water. There are a wide range of opinions on the meaning of the woman's gesture in leaving behind her water jar. Certainly it points to her eagerness to return home (v. 28b),[3] and also to her intention to return.[4] But it means more than that. It suggests that the woman has moved from a literal to a symbolic understanding of water. In terms of the Stages of the narrative, it speaks of how the woman's life has turned around through her one encounter with Jesus.[5] She leaves the well without further thought of the domestic task for which she came. Her intention now is to communicate her insights with her fellow-villagers. Gone is all thought of the well and the barriers that divide Jew from Samaritan, male from female. Her

1. As W. Au points out ('Dialogue as Catechesis', *TBT* 22 [1984], p. 382), the woman's 'progressive realization corresponds to the pattern of Jesus' progressive revelation of himself'.

2. Schneiders, 'Symbolism', pp. 225-26, commenting on the demand for commitment in the Johannine understanding of faith, says of the woman that she 'entered into the symbolic dynamic. She signified her initial commitment and was drawn into the fullness of revelation.'

3. So Schnackenburg, I, p. 443; Bultmann, p. 193; and Bouyer, *Le quatrième évangile*, p. 109. Okure, *Mission*, p. 135, sees this as revealing the woman's eagerness to share the news of her encounter with Jesus.

4. Lindars, p. 28, and Beasley-Murray, p. 63; also O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 75.

5. See Brown, I, p. 173; Marsh, p. 221; Léon-Dufour, I, p. 378; see also Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, p. 202; and Boers, *Mountain*, pp. 182-83.

fixation is now on Jesus and his revelation and the new life that opens before her. At the end of scene 1 the woman asks for miraculous water; by the end of scene 2 she has moved beyond the materialistic to a symbolic understanding of water.[1]

The same may be argued for the woman's witness to the townsfolk (vv. 28c-29). The implication of these verses is that, in encouraging others to open themselves to Jesus' gift (v. 30), she has herself attained a significant degree of faith. Why then do we find the negative interrogative μήτι, which, in Classical Greek, if not Koine, suggests a significant degree of doubt on the woman's part?[2] A number of readings of this verse have taken the question as indicating the tentative nature of her faith.[3] The context, however, makes such an interpretation awkward. The first part of the woman's statement to the villagers in v. 29 (δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα) points back to the opening exchanges of scene 2 (vv. 16-19), where Jesus offered her self-knowledge by revealing her thirst for life. Her words in v. 29 confirm her acceptance of Jesus' insight. Her statement also points forward to the ending of the narrative (v. 39) where the adjectival participle μαρτυρούσης is used to describe these very words in v. 29.[4] The evangelist is using technical language to speak of one who is engaged in christian witness. Taken

1. See Bligh, 'Samaria', p. 330. S.M. Schneiders ('Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church', *BTB* 12 [1982], pp. 39-40) compares this to the Synoptic call to apostleship and the abandoning of one's occupation (e.g. Mt. 4.19-22, 9.9).

2. See BDF §427.220.

3. Bernard, I, p. 152, comments that the woman's question is 'put tentatively, with just a shade of hope that the answer may turn out to be in the affirmative'; see also Beasley-Murray, p. 58; Westcott, p. 74; and Morris, p. 275. Moloney (pp. 156-58, 169-73) argues that the woman's faith is partial while that of the villagers is complete. He interprets the woman's use of Χριστός as an attempt to see Jesus in her own (Samaritan) terms. See also Moloney, 'Cana to Cana', pp. 835-39, and 'The Fourth Gospel's Presentation of Jesus as "the Christ" and J.A.T. Robinson's "Redating"', *Downside Review* 95 (1977), pp. 247-48.

4. According to W.C. van Unnik, 'A Greek Characteristic of Prophecy in the Fourth Gospel', in E. Best and R. McL. Wilson (eds.), *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to M. Black* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 213-17, the motif of 'announcing/telling all things' is an important theme in John's Gospel (e.g. 16.13-15 where it is used of the work of the Holy Spirit), and derives from Greek–Hellenistic vocabulary relating to prophecy (pp. 219-28).

together with the abandoning of the water jar, v. 29 suggests that the woman has accepted, not only Jesus' revelation of her own life, but also the revelation of his identity (v. 26). In this context, it makes more sense to interpret the force of μήτι as indicative not of doubt but of hope.[1]

In the light of this interpretation, we can now see that the woman is engaged in a form of mission which parallels Jesus' mission. According to Okure, the woman speaks here with the openness of the true missionary.[2] Her question is 'a veiled confession couched in the form of a question in order to appeal to the personal judgment of the Samaritans, get them to reflect, and so arouse their interest in Jesus.'[3] Though she does not yet make a full confession of faith, she reveals a maturing faith which contrasts markedly with her response at the end of scene 1 (v. 15).[4] The narrative has reached Stage 4. What the woman now does is to include the townsfolk in her experience of the revelation in order to lead them to Jesus and verify her own hope (Stage 5).

Scene 3: Food/Harvest—Stage 5 (vv. 31-42)

This brings us to the third scene of the narrative, in which the final Stage of the narrative is reached in the faith-experience of the Samaritan villagers (vv. 30-42). The image now moves to that of food/harvest. Once again the pattern of this scene parallels that of the other two: each begins with a request, centres on an image and moves to a climax in the response of faith. Again everything turns on a leading metaphorical statement and involves misunderstanding. At this point the disciples begin to play a significant role in the narrative. Their role, however, is a secondary one: they act as a foil to the woman and the other Samaritans. Even though we know from v. 8 that they are due to return, they interrupt the flow of the narrative,

1. BDF §427.2, cites examples of NT texts where the negative connotation is modified by its context (Jn 4.33, 7.26, 21.5; also Mt. 12.23; Lk. 17.9).

2. According to Collins, 'Representative figures I', p. 40, the woman represents not just the christian believer but is also 'a type of the Christian herald, the Christian messenger' who leads others to faith.

3. Okure, *Mission*, p. 174. See also Bultmann, p. 193: 'The question... has been formulated from the point of view of the person addressed'.

4. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, p. 192) goes further and sees vv. 28-29 as the 'Indienstnahme' of the woman in response to Jesus' word of revelation in v. 26.

intruding into the conversation that is taking place between the woman and Jesus. Nevertheless, we are prepared for their misunderstanding in vv. 31-38. Already, by their disapproving silence in v. 27, we know that they have no idea of what the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is about.[1] Their belated presence is something of an intrusion into the narrative.

Two stages of understanding are thus simultaneously present in scene 3. The main story line continues with the Samaritans who are drawn into the woman's testimony and bring the narrative to Stage 5. At the same time, Jesus' conversation with the disciples comprises the second story line. For them, the narrative moves from Stages 1 to 3, exposing ironically how far they lag behind the Samaritans in understanding. The point is reflected in the narrative structure, which also in a sense lags behind the main story line. Verses 31-38, therefore, create a kind of rupture in the narrative. The reader is caught between two different narrative levels: the dialogue between Jesus and the disciples (vv. 31-38) contrasts with the reader's awareness of the coming of the Samaritans. The imperfect tense of the second verb in v. 30 (ἤρχοντο) makes us conscious of their approach throughout scene 3. Moreover, the conversation between Jesus and the disciples—at least from Jesus' point of view—is related to their coming.

Verses 31-38 thus serve a double purpose. On the one hand the narrative rupture creates an ironical sense of distance between the disciples who are the insiders and the Samaritans who are the outsiders. Moreover the two groups are divided by religious and cultural barriers reinforced in this story by the gender barrier which is a major feature of the narrative. Both categories—insider and outsider—are challenged by the very structure and awkwardness of the narrative. At the same time, the conversation between Jesus and the disciples enables the evangelist to set the story of the Samaritans within its proper theological setting. It is a story about mission which, in the process, discloses christological insight. Jesus is finally revealed as ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (v. 42).

Misunderstanding of the Disciples (Second Story Line: Stages 1 to 3). The third image of the narrative is established in the disciples' offer of food (v. 31) and in Jesus' utterance of v. 32b, made in the context

1. See Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 156-57, who sees the disciples' critical silence as preparatory for their misunderstanding in the scene that follows.

of the coming of the Samaritans (v. 30). The disciples' offer of food parallels Jesus' request of the woman for a drink in v. 7. Within the second story line, this represents Stage 1, with v. 32c revealing the disciples' misunderstanding (ἣν ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε, Stage 2). They are concerned only with the food they have brought from the village. The woman's conversation with Jesus and neglect of her water jar, however, should have alerted them to the fact that what was taking place transcended food and drink. In v. 33 they attempt to make sense of Jesus' metaphor on a material level, by concluding that he has already eaten: 'Das Missverständnis der Frau...und der Jünger...liegt auf derselben fleischlichen Ebene und hat nichts vom Geist Gottes begriffen.'[1]

As a result Jesus clarifies the metaphor of v. 32 in positive terms: ἐμὸν βρῶμά ἐστιν ἵνα ποιήσω τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με καὶ τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον (v. 34). The reference to food 'appears as a metaphorical manifestation of Jesus' divine commission and of the working interrelationship of Jesus and God'.[2] Here food (βρῶσις/βρῶμα) is the vehicle of the metaphor and 'doing the will of my Father' the tenor. As with the previous metaphors of the dialogue, the statement is nonsensical on the literal level. No human being can survive literally on a diet of doing the will of God. Jesus' explication of the metaphor suggests the movement of the second stream of the narrative to Stage 3, though it is not made explicit in any comment by the disciples. It is clear, however, that Jesus is challenging them to find the metaphorical meaning (Stage 4).

In vv. 35-38 Jesus clarifies the metaphor of food, this time in the related context of harvest. Though the flow of the discourse is somewhat awkward, the general sense is clear. Jesus' description of the fields as λευκαί...πρὸς θερισμόν in v. 35b stands in tension with the aphorism of v. 35a which speaks of the harvest as close but still in the future. The paradox lies in the adverb ἤδη: in spite of the natural time-lapse between sowing and reaping, the harvester is *already* employed, the harvesting of the wheat *already* begun.[3] On a literal or

1. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 151.

2. O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 79.

3. Assuming that the adverb belongs with v. 36 and not v. 35. Apart from the textual evidence that supports it (e.g. ℵ D L), it is also significant that, with one exception (9.27), ἤδη always occurs before the verb it modifies (e.g. 3.18; 6.17; 11.39; 13.2; 15.3; 19.28). See Barrett, p. 241; Beasley-Murray, p. 58;

primary level this again makes little sense: the harvest is ready immediately following the sowing! In its second level meaning, as a metaphor for the eschatological 'harvest', it makes perfect sense. As the eschatological ingathering of God's people to lead them εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (v. 36), the harvest is already present in the ministry of Jesus (see καὶ νῦν ἐστιν, v. 23).[1] Just as Jesus' 'food' consists of carrying out the will of God,[2] so harvest is a symbol of the unity of purpose between Jesus and the Father which is revealed in Jesus' mission to the world (see 3.16). In this narrative that divine unity is actualised in the faith journey of the Samaritans. They are the fields ripe for the harvest. They represent the eschatological ingathering of believers which is the final purpose of Jesus' mission.[3]

It is clear from this that vv. 37-38 act primarily as commentary on the present narrative.[4] The faith of the Samaritans is the 'harvest' for which Jesus is waiting and longing during his conversation with the disciples.[5] In being challenged to enter into the harvesting, and the joy of sower and reaper (vv. 37-38),[6] the disciples are called to share the

Westcott, p. 76; against this, cf. Bernard, I, p. 157.

1. Okure comments (*Mission*, p. 157): 'Just as the socio-religious problems raised by the woman... were transferred to the eschatological plane by Jesus and resolved there (living water, true worship), so, too, the relational problems inherent in human sowing and harvesting... are raised to the eschatological plane... where they are definitively resolved.'

2. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, p. 153) sees v. 34 as tied in with the ἔδει of v. 4; the will of God which Jesus obeys results in the harvest of Samaritans.

3. According to Olsson (*Structure and Meaning*, pp. 244, 252-53) this is the heart of the narrative, signifying the end of hostility between 'Judah and Ephraim' (see Isa. 11.11-13); thus for the evangelist, true Samaritans are those who open themselves to the revelation of Jesus.

4. Boers (*Mountain*, p. 188) points out that Jesus' discussion with the disciples acts as a commentary on the whole narrative.

5. Okure, *Mission*, p. 138.

6. The proverbial saying of v. 37 is originally pessimistic in its OT context (see Deut. 20.6 where the idea of one sowing and being unable to reap is used of misfortune; also Job 31.5-8 and Mic. 6.15 where it is used of judgment). See K.E. Dewey, '*Paroimiai* in the Gospel of John', *Semeia* 17 (1980), pp. 86-87. Here, however, it is given an optimistic twist; so M.P. Hogan, 'The Woman at the Well', *TBT* 82 (1976), p. 667. In regard to vv. 37-38 as a whole, Barrett (p. 242) believes they are best taken as parable rather than allegory, although allegorical elements are present. As he rightly points out, the focus is not on the identity of sower and reaper but on the fact that the eschatological age has already come.

harvest with Jesus,[1] and so move to the understanding of faith. They are invited to participate with Jesus in the conclusion of the narrative (Stage 5). That they have not shared in the sowing is self-evident. It is precluded by their adherence to the social barriers dividing Jew and Samaritan, male and female (v. 27) and by their misunderstanding of Jesus' task. As with Nicodemus, however, their story does not move beyond the third Stage. Whereas the woman has engaged in the apostolic task of sowing,[2] the disciples in contrast have neither understood nor shared the task.[3]

Samaritans' Confession of Faith (Main Story Line: Stage 5). Although the greater (and more familiar) part of the narrative focuses on the woman's growth in faith, through Stages 1 to 4, the fifth Stage is reached through the faith response of the Samaritan villagers (vv. 39-42). Apart from anything else, it indicates that the narrative is communally rather than individually oriented. The woman's struggle for understanding is the catalyst in the faith story of the Samaritans.

1. The mission of the disciples does not become effective until after the Resurrection (20.21-23), when, like Jesus, the disciples are 'sent' with the gift of the Holy Spirit (ἀποστέλλω, 4.38, 20.21; πέμπω, 4.34, 20.21).

2. In regard to the identity of the ἄλλοι in v. 38, see the various possibilities suggested by Barrett, p. 243; J.A.T. Robinson, 'The "Others" of John 4.38: A Test of Exegetical Method', in *Twelve New Testament Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 63-66; Lindars in Higgins (ed.), *The Early Church*, p. 197; Cullmann, 'Samaria', p. 190; O. Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle: its Place in Judaism, among the Disciples of Jesus and in Early Christianity. A Study in the Origin of the Gospel of John* (NTL: London: SCM Press, 1976), pp. 16, 49; and Schnackenburg, I, p. 453. From the perspective of the narrative, the reference is primarily to Jesus and the Father (so Okure, *Mission*, p. 163). Whether or not the evangelist has a wider group in mind is difficult to decide. However, Lightfoot (p. 135) is surely right in suggesting that the woman may be said to be engaged in both sowing (v. 29) and reaping (vv. 30, 39-42); see Olsson, *Structure and Meaning*, pp. 233, 237, and Boers, *Mountain*, pp. 184-85.

3. See Culpepper, *Anatomy*, p. 137: 'As near as possible in the narrative context she is given an apostolic role.' See also B. Witherington, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 175; Brown, 'Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel', in *Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 187-89; Schneiders, 'Women', p. 40; and E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p. 327.

She is the link in the chain of witnesses that leads from Jesus' revelation to the final, believing confession of the Samaritan village (Stage 5). Though it is not obvious at first in Jesus' encounter with the woman (vv. 4-26), it soon becomes apparent that this is the first scene in the story of Jesus' mission to the village. The editorial comment of the narrator at v. 9b—οὐ γὰρ συγχρῶνται Ἰουδαῖοι Σαμαρίταις—is overturned in the final verses of the narrative,[1] where Samaritans come to full faith in Jesus the Jew, confessing him as ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου (vv. 41-42) and inviting him to stay with them (vv. 40, 43). The woman represents her people, prefiguring and at the same time personalising their rise to faith.[2] Significantly, their final comment is addressed not to Jesus but to the woman whose witness has brought the narrative to its final Stage.[3] The import of their statement in v. 42 is not to denigrate her earlier witness, but rather to confirm it.[4] The statement also relativises the woman's role in relation to Jesus. She, like John the Baptist and other faithful witnesses, is required to step back in the presence of Jesus: ἐκεῖνον δεῖ αὐξάνειν, ἐμὲ δὲ ἐλαττοῦσθαι (3.30).[5]

In this sense, the final statement of the Samaritans serves to draw all the Samaritans of the narrative into the one confession of faith (v. 42).[6] The villagers have discovered for themselves what the woman already knows. Jesus' gift of living water, which crosses material barriers of race and gender (vv. 9, 21-24, 27), has now become a reality for them too. As a result of this new understanding

1. In the light of the crossing of such racial boundaries, it is ironical that at 8.48 the 'Jews' accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan.

2. See C. Koester, '"The Savior of the World" (John 4.42)', *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 670-74.

3. The view of M. de Jonge, *Jesus as Prophet and King in the Fourth Gospel* (Gembloux: Duculot; Leiden: Brill, 1973), pp. 174-75, is unusual in arguing that the Samaritan villagers (though more perceptive than the woman or Nicodemus) are still to an extent lacking in knowledge; see also E. Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2nd edn, 1968), p. 60.

4. So Carson, p. 231.

5. See Okure, *Mission*, pp. 170, 179-81.

6. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 155, 195-98) speaks of the woman's recognition of Jesus in four steps ('Erkenntnisstufen'): she recognises him as an unusual Jew, as the giver of the gift of water, as a prophet from God, as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. This contrasts with the disciples for whom the fourth step is lacking.

they acclaim Jesus as 'the Saviour of the world'.[1] As they are incorporated into her struggle in the first two scenes, in which the dividing walls are broken down (Stages 1 to 4), so now in the final scene she is incorporated into their confession of faith. She and they together have believed and heard and come to know (πιστεύομεν... ἀκηκόαμεν...οἴδαμεν, vv. 41-42). Here in this harvest Stage 5 of the narrative is reached. A full confession is made, not by the disciples who have been left behind, but by the Samaritans. In coming to the well, the villagers confess their faith in Jesus as the giver of living water, who offers the gift to human beings irrespective of the boundaries that divide and alienate them. The Samaritans commit themselves to Jesus in discipleship and the narrative is brought to its climactic conclusion.

C. *Conclusion*

From this analysis it is clear that the five Stages of symbolic narrative are present in the narrative of 4.1-42. In each scene, the narrative is drawn from an image which becomes, through a series of steps based on misunderstanding, a symbol giving rise to faith: 'Das buchstäbliche Missverständnis lässt eine sorgfältig vorbereite climax entstehen.'[2] Each scene ends with the response of the character, but each scene also advances the quality of the response, so that by the third scene, the narrative as a whole comes to a climax of faith. In the first scene, the response is still on the material level, though the narrative has moved to Stage 3 (v. 15), in the second the narrative reaches the fourth Stage as the woman begins to communicate her developing faith to the other Samaritans (vv. 27-30), and in the final scene the whole village comes dramatically to full faith (Stage 5). The three images, and in particular the dominant image of water (the well), are the means by which the drama moves from a literal to a symbolic understanding. In contrast, a second narrative line is inaugurated with the disciples in scene 3. However, their apparent failure to understand Jesus' meaning leaves the narrative at Stage 3. They do not understand Jesus' conversation

1. Talbert (p. 118) argues that, in using the title ὁ σωτὴρ τοῦ κόσμου, the Samaritans see Jesus beyond nationalistic messianic terms as one who 'exercised worldwide dominion'. On the imperial connotations of the phrase, see Koester, '"Savior of the World"', pp. 665-80.

2. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 151.

with the woman, nor are they incorporated into the final confession of the Samaritans. Their narrative, like their understanding, lags far behind.

One of the most important points which arises out of this analysis of 4.1-42 is the way in which the evangelist, by bringing together literary technique and theological meaning, has created an identifiable narrative pattern. Through the various narrative Stages, the woman and her people move from a literal and material level of understanding to a metaphorical and symbolic one. Symbolic narrative is thus a way of speaking about the step-by-step movement towards understanding Jesus' offer of life.[1] Finally the Samaritans are presented with the 'crisis' of the narrative: to accept the gift of living water and affirm Jesus as the source of life, or to reject the gift and, in effect, choose death. In their acceptance of the gift and final confession (v. 42), a new christological understanding is reached in the Fourth Gospel. The breaking down of sexual and racial barriers has disclosed a new and universal vision of Jesus.

At the same time, the narrator draws the implied reader into the dynamics of the narrative: 'John does not merely *present* the story of 4.1-42 to the reader but instead narrates it in such a way that the reader *participates* in the narrative and the revelatory experience communicated by it.'[2] In the main story line, the reader is invited to enter the woman's struggle and experience for herself the faith and confession of the Samaritan villagers. Through the negative portrayal of the disciples in the second narrative line, the reader is challenged to move beyond them to embrace the universality of the divine mission. Thus through positive and negative identification (with the Samaritan woman and her people on the one hand and with the disciples on the other), she is invited to move beyond boundaries of race and gender: from the literal level to the symbolic and from unbelief to true faith and witness.

In this process, the symbolic significance of the images, established through the features of symbolic narrative, is of key importance for John's incarnational outlook. As symbols created by the narrative and developed through misunderstanding in dialogue with Jesus, the images function in a theological as well as literary way. They give expression to John's theology of incarnation, asserting the view that

1. See Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 190-98.
2. O'Day, *Revelation*, p. 89; see also 'Narrative Mode', p. 668.

material reality—all that is encompassed by the term σάρξ—is capable of symbolising the divine δόξα or πνεῦμα. Here the fusion of meaning within metaphor, which creates a new semantic structure, is paralleled by the theological fusion of σάρξ–πνεῦμα within the theological framework of the narrative. The symbols point to a transcendent reality beyond themselves and are at the same time the gateway to that reality. It is precisely in the faith encounter between reader and text, through a correct reading of 4.1-42, that the possibility for a new symbolic identity and a new life takes place. It is a life which, for the evangelist, quenches the human thirst for life, gives a new sense of intimacy with God in worship, and challenges those who receive it to bear witness to that life before others.

D. *Excursus: Role of Jesus' Humanity*

Before concluding the discussion on 4.1-42, something needs to be said of the role played by Jesus' humanity in the narrative. John's literary technique in the symbolic narratives, as we have seen, arises out of and shapes the theological dynamic. The way in which John brings into partnership an aspect of material reality (vehicle) and his perception of Jesus (tenor) is both a literary and theological achievement. It arises out of John's stress on the incarnation of the divine Logos, which concerns not only the humanity of Jesus (see 1.14a) but also, though in a secondary or derivative sense, the images of the narrative.[1] Jesus' thirst in v. 7, for example, and his implied hunger in vv. 8 and 31, are obvious examples of his humanity, on which the images of the narrative depend.[2] Nevertheless, it is strange that when we look closely at the σάρξ of Jesus in the narrative, we find that it seems to function merely as a narrative device for raising images of spiritual hunger and thirst.[3] But if Jesus' request for water is merely a literary device, and if he does not drink from the water jar nor eat the food the disciples have brought him, we are left with a serious theological inconsistency. What kind of human being is this who, tired and thirsty

1. On this, see Thompson, *Humanity*, pp. 33-39.

2. See Talbert, p. 112: 'That Jesus is weary (v. 6) and thirsty (v. 7) confirms the humanity of the one who will, in this conversation, eventually claim divinity (v. 26)'.

3. So Haenchen, I, p. 219, who speaks of the mundane level being used 'only as a transition to the religious'.

after a long journey and in the heat of the day (v. 6), does not drink of the water in the well; and who, though in need of food, can be nourished solely by the spiritual food of doing the Father's will (vv. 32, 34)? Is John guilty of a 'naive docetism' here?[1]

This conclusion may seem plausible but is in fact unnecessary, once we give sufficient value to the narrative and its theological framework. To accuse John of docetism is to miss the literary cues and to 'psychologise' the narrative. The evangelist is uninterested in the psychological reasons behind Jesus' apparent indifference to material sustenance. What matters is the literary intentionality of the text and the question of where the theological focus of the passage lies.[2] From the perspective of the narrative, the expression of Jesus' physical needs has important literary and theological significance. John *does* intend his readers to take seriously the human needs, the σάρξ, of Jesus. They play too central a role in the narrative to be dismissed, in Käsemann's words as 'the absolute minimum of the costume designed for the one who dwelt for a little while among men, appearing to be one of them, yet without himself being subjected to earthly conditions.'[3] Even if we regard Jesus' thirst as a literary device directed at the woman, that in itself is an indication of theological significance. It helps to establish the foundational image of the narrative and, through the interplay of form and content, is a pointer to theological meaning: 'Jesus' thirst and her as yet unrecognized thirst are...inseparably linked.'[4] It binds together, in a common humanity, two human beings separated by strong yet invisible barriers of gender and race. It points, in Okure's terms, to the vulnerability of a human Jesus who acts as the authentic missionary.[5]

To argue in this way is not to ignore the fact that no mention is

1. Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, pp. 25-26; see also his discussion of 1.14, pp. 6, 9-10. Against this, cf. G. Bornkamm, 'Towards the Interpretation of John's Gospel: A Discussion of *The Testament of Jesus* by Ernst Käsemann', in J. Ashton (ed.), *The Interpretation of John* (Issues in Religion and Theology, 9; Philadelphia: Fortress Press; London: SPCK, 1986), pp. 91-92; also Thompson, *Humanity*, pp. 1-11, 33-53, 87-115.

2. So Haenchen, I, p. 225, who says that the real question for the evangelist is what it is that gives meaning to human life: 'Here the Evangelist means that man lives out of what he lives for.'

3. Käsemann, *Testament of Jesus*, p. 10.

4. Okure, *Mission*, p. 95.

5. Okure, *Mission*, pp. 86, 95.

made of Jesus eating or drinking in the narrative. This need not imply that he does not do so; it means only that the narrator has neglected to tell us because his theological interests lie elsewhere.[1] For the evangelist, the σάρξ of Jesus, manifested here in his hunger and thirst, has no independent significance. The Fourth Gospel gives no distinctive theological meaning to the humanity of Jesus in itself, nor to the images of the Gospel, nor to σάρξ in an independent sense. To argue this is not to deny the centrality of σάρξ in John's symbolic universe.[2] Rather, it is to assert that it finds its true meaning in a symbolic role. The σάρξ of Jesus in the narrative of 4.1-42 effects a change of focus from material to spiritual needs. This can happen because 'Jesus' human life and death are the place of revelation';[3] because, in other words, Jesus is the definitive symbol of God. On this basis alone, the Johannine Jesus is able to transform the woman's and the disciples' physical needs into a symbol of deeper needs which only he can fulfill. In this sense, the motif of Jesus' hunger and thirst is theological as well as literary.[4]

Within the evangelist's symbolic framework, therefore, it is necessary to hold in tension the importance of both the signifier (the material world and human life) and the signified (the symbolic role of the Revealer). In metaphorical terms, new meaning is created by the

1. In the same way, the woman neglects her water jar (v. 28) and the narrator makes no mention of her filling it or drinking from it or eventually taking it home with her.

2. Speaking of Jesus'origins in the context of Jn 8, Thompson (*Humanity*, p. 26) comments: 'One's identity does not ultimately depend upon one's earthly heritage, but neither does it negate either the existence or importance of the earthly sphere.' Jesus' origins are important but by themselves cannot encapsulate the mystery of his person (p. 31). His humanity is held in common with other human beings, but at the same time 'that humanity does not finally limit or define him' (p. 128).

3. Thompson, *Humanity*, p. 119.

4. This is a very different position from that of Schottroff, 'Johannes 4, 5-15', esp. pp. 208-14, who perceives a thorough-going dualism behind this narrative. For her, the two levels of meaning within the text—e.g. within misunderstanding—are in opposition. To move from one level to the other is to render meaningless the concerns and needs of the flesh; eternal life involves 'ein bestimmtes negatives Verhältnis zur Welt' (p. 208). Here the flesh is perceived, not as offensive as for R. Bultmann (*Theology of the New Testament* [2 vols.; London: SCM Press, 1965], II, pp. 40-49, esp. pp. 46-47), but as irrelevant for the life of believers; the same is true of Jesus' humanity. Against this, cf. Thompson, *Humanity*, pp. 14-15, 34-36.

fusion of tenor and vehicle. In this fusion, both elements are important and both find new identity within the metaphor. This also is true in the dialectic between God and material reality within John's symbolic outlook. Neither is rendered irrelevant; both are necessary. Nevertheless the material is given new meaning in its fusion with the divine. It is this dimension of material reality which is the concern of the evangelist. The humanity of Jesus, his σάρξ, is to be understood as genuine in the Fourth Gospel but only in relation to its symbolic value. The purpose is that, through it, the divine being and the divine life may be disclosed. In the narrative of 4.1-42, the humanity of Jesus, along with the imagery, reflects the way in which the material world finds its deepest meaning in being symbolic of the divine.

Chapter 4

JOHN 5.1-47: THE HEALING AT THE POOL

In a number of ways, Jn 5.1-47 is different from the two narratives we have so far examined. Instead of an image, or series of images such as we saw in John 3 and 4.1-42, we have at the centre a Johannine 'sign', σημεῖον, consisting of the healing of a sick man. Linked to the 'sign' is the motif of the Sabbath which becomes central to the narrative and gives a new interpretative dimension to the healing. Nevertheless, while the unity of John 5 in its present form is relatively uncomplicated, the question of its narrative status is not. Can we speak of symbolic narrative where the narrative (vv. 1-18) seems so completely overtaken by discourse (vv. 19-47)? I believe that John 5 has enough of the characteristics of symbolic narrative to include it in the narratives we have so far examined. We will see, as we proceed, how far it coheres and how far it differs from the pattern we have so far established.

The central theological theme of John 5 is that Jesus carries out God's work of giving life and judging. This is the justification for Jesus' work on the Sabbath and the inner meaning of the 'sign'. The miracle in John 5 is not explicitly designated as σημεῖον, since the narrator has good reason for preferring the term ἔργον (vv. 21, 36) and the cognate ἐργάζομαι (v. 17).[1] In terms of symbolic narrative,

1. On the relationship between 'signs' and works in the Fourth Gospel, see M. de Jonge, 'Signs and Works in the Fourth Gospel', in *Jesus: Stranger from Heaven and Son of God. Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine Perspective* (SBLSBS, 11; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), pp. 31-36. According to him, while there are several points at which σημεῖον and ἔργον are used interchangeably, generally the Johannine Jesus prefers the latter. This is particularly true of contexts where the emphasis is on Jesus' 'unity in intention and action with God' (p. 132). See also J. Painter, 'Text and Context in John 5', *AusBR* 35 (1987), p. 33;

what is important here is that, as a 'sign', the narrative acts in a way that parallels the images in other symbolic narratives. The 'signs' are miraculous events that relate to material and physical reality and, through the narrative, become symbols of eschatological life. Like the images, it is their symbolic function within the narrative which is the main point.[1]

The main character of John 5 is at first the sick man (vv. 1-9). However, as he ends up siding with the religious authorities and shows little character development, the focus soon moves to the 'Jews' who take over the leading role (vv. 10-18). Though misunderstanding is present, and also literary development of the central symbolism, neither the healed man nor the 'Jews' come to a faith experience. On the contrary, the movement of the narrative is in the opposite direction. John 5 therefore demonstrates a completely different narrative response to Jesus. While the narrative of John 3 is about the indecision of Nicodemus contrasted with the faith of John the Baptist, and the story of the Samaritan woman demonstrates the development of mature faith, the healing in John 5 is primarily about unbelief and rejection.

John 5 is generally seen as beginning a new section of the Gospel.[2] It sets in motion the motif of the opposition of the 'Jews' which will run through the ensuing chapters, culminating in the 'sign' at Bethany and the plot to kill Jesus (11.1–12.11).[3] At the same time, John 5 is

Schnackenburg, I, pp. 518-20; K.H. Rengstorf, 'σημεῖον', *TDNT*, VII, pp. 247-50; and Ashton, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 520-22. According to Brown, I, p. 527, the ἔργα include miracles but extend also to the words of Jesus, indeed his entire ministry. However, the fact that the narrator is content to use σημεῖον even in important contexts (e.g. 20.30), indicates that the contrast between the two terms ought not to be exaggerated. Although ἔργον is a more general term, the two overlap in relation to Jesus' miracles; see Rengstorf, 'σημεῖον', pp. 247-48.

1. See above, Introduction, pp. 13-15.

2. So Brown, I, pp. 201-204, who sees the section ending with ch. 10 and focusing on the feasts of the 'Jews'; also G. Mlakuzhyil, *The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel* (AnBib, 117; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1987), pp. 174-81. Mentioned explicitly are the Sabbath (5.9b, 10, 16, 18; 7.22-23; 9.14, 16), Passover (6.4), Tabernacles (7.2, 8, 10-11, 14, 37), and *Hanukkah* (10.22). On this see Brown, I, p. cxli-c.liv, and G.A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Zaccheus Studies NT; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), pp. 26-30.

3. For R.A. Culpepper, 'The Gospel of John and the Jews', *RevExp* 84 (1987), pp. 275-80, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι present as one character in the Gospel and ought to be examined as such within a narrative context. Their hostility is not uniform but rather escalates through the first half of the Gospel; see also Culpepper,

also linked to the previous section of the Gospel with the second 'sign' at Cana (4.43-54). Though the healing of the Official's Son belongs primarily to the 'Cana to Cana' sequence, it is linked to John 5 in the shared theme of Jesus as life-giver. As a result, the discourse of 5.19-30 has echoes of the previous miracle.[1] The second healing is important, however, because it adds the Sabbath element (5.9), which clarifies and deepens our understanding of Jesus' role as life-giver. The Sabbath comes to plays a major role in the narrative and discourse of John 5.

A. *Structure and Overview*

The structure of John 5 is a simple one, consisting of three scenes: the first two consist of narrative (vv. 1-9, vv. 10-18),[2] and the third is a discourse in three parts (vv. 19-47). The discourse is a commentary on the healing story. The first part of the discourse (vv. 19-30) has a cohesive unity with the narrative of vv. 1-18. The second part (vv. 31-38), while having no immediately discernible relation to the first two scenes, follows from the first part of the discourse, giving a theological basis for Jesus' claims in vv. 19-30. The third part of the discourse (vv. 39-47) deals with the theme of judgment, recalling the controversy with the 'Jews' over Jesus' breach of the Sabbath in vv. 9b-18.[3] The motif of the Sabbath, therefore, runs through the

Anatomy, pp. 125-32, and Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 29.

1. Brown (I, p. cxliii) recognises that the healing of the official's son 'looks backward in recalling the first Cana miracle, and yet looks forward with its theme of life, which is taken up in ch. v'; see also Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 318; Hoskyns, p. 249; and Beasley-Murray, p. 67. However, some scholars argue that Jn 5 and 6 have become dislocated and need to be reversed; so Bultmann, p. 237; Bernard, I, pp. xvi-xxx; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 5-9; and G. Sloyan, pp. 66-67, 77. Against this, cf. Barrett, pp. 21-26, esp. p. 24. Like other suggested dislocations in the Fourth Gospel, the theory is unnecessary.

2. Ellis (pp. 86-90) sees the unity of vv. 1-18 as evidenced in a chiastic structure.

3. J. Beutler (*Martyria: Tradionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes* [Frankfurt am Main: Josef Knecht, 1972], p. 254) sees Jn 5 as a unity in three sections: healing (vv. 1-9a), dialogue (vv. 9v-18), and discourse (vv. 19-47). See also Beasley-Murray, pp. 73-79, and Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 69-77; also Lindars, p. 206. Schnackenburg, II, p. 91, sees a break between vv. 15 and 16 (also Brown, I, p. 201) and R.H. Strachan, *The Fourth*

entire sequence. The basic structure of the unit may be outlined as follows:

Scene 1: *Healing of the Sick Man on the Sabbath (5.1-9)*
(a) Setting, vv. 1-3
(b) Jesus' opening conversation with the sick man, vv. 4-7
(c) Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath, vv. 8-9

Scene 2: *Conflict with the 'Jews' over the Sabbath (5.10-18)*
(a) Dialogue between the man and the 'Jews', vv. 10-13
(b) Dialogue between the man and Jesus, v. 14
(c) Dialogue between the man and the 'Jews', v. 15
(d) Conflict between Jesus and the 'Jews', vv. 16-18

Scene 3: *Jesus' Discourse on his Sabbath Work (5.19-47)*
(a) Jesus' Sabbath work as God's work, vv. 19-30
(b) God's attestation of Jesus, vv. 31-40
(c) Jesus' judgment on the 'Jews' endorsed by Moses, vv. 41-47

Before examining the narrative and symbolic status of John 5, the schema may be looked at in more detail:

Scene 1: Healing of the Sick Man on the Sabbath (5.1-9)

(a) The setting is Jerusalem at the Pool of Bethzatha,[1] during an unnamed 'feast of the Jews' (vv. 1-2).

(b) The sick man is one of many (v. 3) singled out by Jesus because of the long duration of his (unspecified) illness (vv. 5-6)[2] and his inability to reach the Pool in time to be cured (v. 7).[3]

Gospel: Its Significance and Environment (London: SCM Press, 3rd edn, 1941), pp. 166-67, after v. 16.

1. Assuming this to be the name of the Pool (see ℵ 33), although it is uncertain and may in fact be Bethesda (e.g. A C K) or Bethsaida (e.g. $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ B; see also 3Q15). See the helpful discussion in Barrett, pp. 251-253; also Brown, I, p. 106; B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), p. 208, and G.D. Fee, 'On the Inauthenticity of John 5.3b-4', *EvQ* 54 (1982), pp. 207-18.

2. Some scholars identify allegorical details in the narrative; e.g. Dodd (*Interpretation*, pp. 319-20) who sees the Pool as representing the Torah which for the sick man 'is powerless to create the will to live', and Marsh, pp. 249-50. However, this is not made explicit in the narrative. It is also unlikely that the number thirty-eight is symbolic; so Brown, I, p. 207, and Barrett, p. 253.

3. Assuming the omission of vv. 3b-4, in accordance with the oldest and best MSS (e.g. $\mathfrak{P}^{66, 75}$ a B) and the majority of scholars. See Schnackenburg, I, p. 182,

(c) Jesus initiates the conversation by asking the man θέλεις ὑγιὴς γενέσθαι; (v. 6). The man assumes, mistakenly, that Jesus is offering to help him into the Pool (v. 7).[1] He has no idea of who Jesus is or the gift he is offered.[2] His answer reveals a sense of resignation and helplessness. It is this that Jesus' question challenges.[3]

(d) Jesus overturns the man's expectations—as well as his passivity—by encouraging him to action in three imperatives: ἔγειρε, ἆρον . . . περιπάτει (v. 8). The man obeys and is healed (v. 9).

(e) At the last moment the text discloses a new piece of information which will later be seen as central:[4] the healing has taken place on the Sabbath (v. 9b).[5]

Scene 2: Dialogue and Conflict over the Sabbath (5.10-18)

(a) The reference to the Sabbath in v. 9 leads directly into scene 2,

II, p. 95; Brown, I, p. 207; Bultmann, p. 241; Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 209; and Fee, 'Inauthenticity', pp. 207-18. The gloss is an attempt to explain the miraculous powers of the Pool.

1. So Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 210.

2. So Haenchen, I, p. 245.

3. So R.T. Fortna, *The Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor: From Narrative Source to Present Gospel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), p. 114. Calvin (p. 119) comments that the sick man 'limits God's help to his own ideas and does not dare promise himself more than he conceives in his mind'.

4. Alter (*Biblical Narrative*, p. 66) points out that Hebrew narrative often omits essential information until the immediate point where it is required (e.g.1 Sam. 21.7). See J. L. Staley, 'Stumbling in the Dark, Reaching for the Light: Reading Character in John 5 and 9', *Semeia* 53 (1991), p. 60, who argues that the belated reference to the Sabbath causes the reader to re-assess the meaning of the narrative.

5. The disclosure is less awkward if, as Brown argues (I, p. 206), the feast referred to in v. 1 is the Sabbath. Other possibilities are: Pentecost (Schnackenburg, II, p. 93; Ellis, p. 88), Passover (Bultmann, p. 240; Bernard, I, p. 225), *Purim* (J. Bowman, 'The Identity and Date of the Unnamed Feast of John 5.1', in H. Goedicke [ed.], *Near-Eastern Studies in Honor of W.F. Albright* [Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971], pp. 43-56), and New Year (M.J. Moreton, 'Feast, Sign and Discourse in John 5', *Studia Evangelica: Papers Presented to the Third International Congress on New Testament Studies.* IV. *The New Testament Scriptures* [TU zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 112; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968], pp. 209-13; A. Guilding, *The Fourth Gospel and Jewish Worship. A Study of the Relation of St. John's Gospel to the Ancient Jewish Lectionary System* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960], pp. 69-86). Haenchen (I, p. 243) sees the reference to the feast as explaining Jesus' presence in Jerusalem; see also Barrett, p. 251.

which consists of four exchanges between the healed man, Jesus and the religious authorities (vv. 10-18).

(b) Initially the conflict relates to the man's illegal action in carrying his mattress on the Sabbath (v. 10; see v. 9b). For this he is interrogated by the authorities.[1]

(c) The man quickly passes responsibility to Jesus (v. 11), disclaiming any knowledge of his healer (vv. 12-13). Jesus finds him and warns him of the consequences of sin (v. 14) and the man immediately informs the authorities of Jesus' identity (v. 15).

(d) In v. 16 we discover (somewhat awkwardly) that behind the man's breach of the Sabbath lies Jesus' own: ὅτι ταῦτα ἐποίει ἐν σαββάτῳ. It is a reference not simply to Jesus' command that the man break the Sabbath (v. 8), but to his healing ministry in general.[2]

(e) Jesus' claim to share God's Sabbath work (v. 17) is so scandalous that the 'Jews' are provoked to violence (v. 18).

Scene 3: Jesus' Discourse on his Sabbath Work (5.19-47)

(a) Verses 17-18 provide the basis for the first part of the discourse which follows (vv. 19-30).[3] In vv. 19-30 Jesus explains the claim of v. 17, in which he explains his understanding of his mission from God: he is carrying out the divine work, on God's behalf.[4]

(b) Verses 24-29 develop the theme of Jesus' divine activity in relation to faith. Jesus reveals that the purpose of his mission is to enable human beings to make the crossing from death to life (v. 24).[5]

(c) In v. 30 Jesus summarises the first part of the discourse which

1. See *m. Sabb.* 7.2, 10.5; also Jer. 17.21-22, and Neh. 13.15.

2. See Barrett, p. 255. Lindars (p. 210) notes that there are a number of awkward points in the narrative, such as the confusion over who is guilty of breaking the Sabbath. In spite of this, it is clear that the narrator wishes to focus on Jesus' healing work.

3. H. Van Dyke Parunak ('Transitional Techniques in the Bible', *JBL* 102 [1983], pp. 538-39) regards vv. 17-18 as transitional verses within the overall structure of vv. 10-17 and vv. 18-47.

4. Schnackenburg (II, p. 99) points out that vv. 16-30 are a development of the 'Johannine kerygma' found at John 3.16-18.

5. X. Léon-Dufour ('Trois chiasmes johanniques', *NTS* 7 [1961], pp. 253-55) sees vv. 19-30 as a chiasm, with v. 24 as the 'point médian', encapsulating the central theme of judgment (p. 254); cf. Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 76-77, who has a more helpful structure for the passage (esp. p. 76).

leads into the second part (vv. 31-40).[1] Here the theme changes from Jesus' mission (vv. 19-30) to the forensic one of witness. These verses are closely linked with vv. 19-30: Jesus substantiates his divine claim by establishing his credentials.[2]

(d) The setting is that of a court scene (see Mic 6.1-8), where God summons witnesses against the people.[3] In his defence Jesus calls upon what seems to be a three-fold witness. However, there is only one witness, that of God (vv. 32, 37-38) whose testimony is effected through the human witness of John the Baptist (vv. 33-35), the ἔργα of Jesus' ministry and the Scriptures (vv. 39-40, 45-47).[4]

(e) In v. 37b Jesus confronts his accusers with the justice of the divine court (ἡ κρίσις ἡ ἐμὴ; δικαία ἐστίν, v. 30); Jesus' opponents have rejected his offer of life.[5]

(g) The last part of the discourse (vv. 41-47) ends on an ironical note. Moses, giver of the Torah and advocate of the 'Jews',[6] has become their prosecutor (ὁ κατηγορῶν, v. 45) through the words and works of Jesus.[7] The tables have now been turned: Jesus is vindicated and the 'Jews' condemned by their own defence counsel.[8] The closing verses of the sequence bring us back to the beginning.[9] Those who have placed Jesus on trial for breaking the Law are condemned by the same Law.

1. As Meeks points out (*Prophet-King*, p. 303), the whole discourse is held together by the theme of 'Jesus' function and authority as God's agent'. Against this cf. Neyrey, pp. 15-18, 29-31.

2. So Schnackenburg, II, p. 119.

3. According to Beasley-Murray, pp. 77-78, 'Jesus stands opposed by the Jews, who demand witnesses to justify the claims of Jesus in his teaching'.

4. So Schnackenburg, II, p. 120.

5. Meeks, *Prophet-King*, pp. 299-301, sees v. 37 as an allusion to the theophany at Mount Horeb (Deut. 4.12); so also Beutler, *Martyria*, pp. 260-61, and Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 68. Against this, cf. J.C. Hindley, 'Witness in the Fourth Gospel', *SJT* 18 (1965), pp. 325-25, who sees the Father's witness as 'the internal assent of the heart which leads to belief' (p. 326).

6. Beutler (*Martyria*, pp. 255-56) sees the introduction of Moses as carried over from the reference to the Scriptures in v. 39.

7. See Barrett, p. 58. According to Meeks (*Prophet-King*, pp. 294-95) the real irony lies in the fact that 'in almost every circle of Judaism and in Samaritanism Moses was regarded as the primary *defender* (συνήγορος, παράκλητος) of Israel before God'. See Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 33, and Carson, pp. 265-66.

8. So Beasley-Murray, p. 78.

9. See Bultmann, p. 273.

B. *Narrative Status of John 5*

Before examining John 5 as symbolic narrative, we first need to raise the issue of its narrative status. From this brief synopsis of the 'argument' of the chapter, we can see that the first section (vv. 1-18), at least, is unquestionably a unified narrative. Similarly vv. 19-30, though consisting of discourse material, can be classed as part of the narrative since it flows directly from it. These verses unfold the meaning of the 'sign' in direct response to the hostility of the 'Jews' in vv.16-18. In the following two parts of the discourse (vv. 31-47), however, there is no further dialogue with the central characters and the connection with the narrative, at least at first glance, seems loose. To separate John 5 into 'sign' and discourse, therefore, seems the only reasonable way of classifying it. Moreover, the narrative is not resumed after the discourse ends in v. 47. How then can we claim John 5 as narrative (let alone symbolic narrative)?

Comparison with John 9

To answer this question, we need to begin by comparing the narratives of John 5 and 9. John 9 is undeniably a full narrative, yet there are remarkable similarities between it and John 5, as well as an equally significant number of differences.[1] The main similarities are:[2]

(a) The two men are suffering from illness of long duration (5.5; 9.1-2) and both are healed gratuitously by Jesus (5.8-9; 9.5-6).

(b) Both healings are in some way related to a Pool (κολυμβήθρα, 5.2, 7, 9.7) and both take place on the Sabbath (5.9b, 9.14).

(c) Both are Johannine 'signs' though the language preferred is that of 'works' (κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι, 5.17; μείζονα

1. On this, see Staley, 'Stumbling in the Dark', pp. 55-80, especially p. 58, and R.F. Collins, *'These Things Have Been Written': Studies on the Fourth Gospel* (Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs, 2; Louvain: Peters Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 21-23.

2. On the basis of similarities with the narrative of Jn 9, Martyn (*History and Theology*, pp. 70-72) sees Jn 5 as a two-level drama relating both to the historical Jesus and to the Johannine community in its conflict with the synagogue. See Bultmann, p. 239, and Barrett, p. 250.

τούτων...ἔργα, 5.20; ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμψαντός με, 9.4).

(d) Both healings lead to conflict with the 'Jews', including interrogation of the healed man (5.10-13; 9.13-17, 24-34).

(e) Jesus seeks out the healed man and confronts him (εὑρίσκει αὐτόν, 5.14; εὑρὼν αὐτόν, 9.35).

(f) Both chapters end with Jesus pronouncing judgment against the religious authorities (5.45, 9.40-41).[1]

Striking though these similarities are, the two stories also differ in several important ways:

(a) John 9 is a whole narrative brought to completion, whereas in John 5 there is no narrative ending.

(b) Far from being persecuted by the authorities, as in the case of the man born blind (9.34), the healed man in John 5 seems to collude with them by informing on Jesus (5.15).

(c) Significantly, the story of the sick man's encounter with Jesus occurs much earlier in the narrative than in the case of the man born blind (see 9.35-39). In a sense, as we will see, the man's decision in John 5 has already been made.[2] It is not surprising, therefore, that the part played by the healed man comes to an end before the discourse even begins.

(d) Unlike John 9, where the healed man shares the leading role with the Pharisees, in John 5 the 'Jews' take over the role of leading character from the healed man.

(e) Whereas John 9 concludes with an exchange between Jesus and the Pharisees (9.40-41), John 5 has no further dialogue between Jesus and the 'Jewish' authorities after v. 18.

These similarities and differences between John 5 and 9 raise the question of the narrative status of John 5, suggesting two contradictory answers. On the one hand the similarities lead us to conclude that John 5 belongs in the same category as John 9: a long

1. See M. Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde nach dem Johannesevangelium: Eine bibeltheologische Untersuchung* (Innsbrucker theologische Studien, 27; Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1989), pp. 337-39, and A. Duprez, *Jésus et les dieux guérisseurs: À propos de Jean, V* (CahRB, 12; Paris: Gabalda, 1970), pp. 151-53.

2. According to Meeks (*Prophet-King*, p. 293) while the man born blind is a 'witness on Jesus' behalf', the healed man in Jn 5, when also under interrogation, 'becomes a witness *against* Jesus'.

narrative in similar style, involving symbol, plot, characterisation and conflict. The differences, on the other hand, point to the opposite conclusion, that in John 5 we are dealing with a different literary form, one in which narrative plays only a part. For example, it could be argued that the narrative functions merely as a prelude or introduction to the discourse, and that the real issue of John 5 is the christological revelation contained in the discourse, to which the narrative is only partially connected. Both explanations make sense within their own terms when looked at from two different perspectives. How then are we to explain, if not resolve, the seemingly irresolvable contradiction?

Narrative Elements in the Discourse of John 5

Clearly neither conclusion is adequate of itself; each deals with only part of the evidence. The situation is more complex that either conclusion would suggest. To realise the point we need only to re-examine the third scene of John 5 (vv. 19-47). It is hard to be satisfied with classifying it merely as 'discourse' for one very important reason. Everything that Jesus says in these verses is directed towards the central characters, the 'Jews'. This creates an anomalous effect: although the scene consists solely of discourse, it contains dramatic elements, impressions of a plot. For example, v. 31, with its change of image, seems to imply a tacit objection on the part of Jesus' opponents.[1] It suggests an interjection such as: How is it you can make such claims for yourself? Why should we believe you? Moreover, in vv. 31-47, the last two sections of the discourse read almost like a debate. They use the rhetorical device of raising possible objections from opponents in order to silence them. And in the final verses of the scene (vv. 45-47), Jesus co-opts Moses, the main ally of his opponents, and uses him against them. Best of all is the way in which the forensic imagery develops throughout the discourse. The effect is a dramatic one. In the first part Jesus is revealed as judge of the world (vv. 19-30); in the second he becomes the one who is on trial (vv. 31-32); in the third he turns the tables on his opponents and pronounces judgment against them (vv. 45-47). The role reversal from judge to accused to judge again acts with the realism of drama. Woven into the texture of the discourse are the recognisable contours of narrative.

1. As Brown argues, I, p. 227.

Nevertheless, the contrary indications cannot be ignored. It is impossible to argue that John 5 is a full and cogent narrative. Even with the remarkable traces of plot in vv. 19-47, the discourse is never fully integrated into a whole narrative structure.[1] The only possible explanation is that what we have in John 5 is a less developed example of the kind of carefully constructed symbolic narrative which dominates the first half of the Gospel. Although John 5 is by no means a crude piece of work—it is arguably a 'carefully thought out composition'[2]—it lacks the literary sophistication which is found in most of the other symbolic narratives. More specifically, it lacks the level of integration between form and content which is the great achievement of John's symbolic narratives. It contains—embryonically, at least—what other long narratives have in fuller form, perhaps suggesting, as we have seen, an early attempt at a form which the narrator developed over a number of years.[3] The essential features of symbolic narrative are present but at several points only in outline.

C. *John 5 as Symbolic Narrative*

Because of the narrative elements of John 5—explicitly within the first two scenes and implicitly in the last scene—the five basic Stages of the narrative can be identified with sufficient clarity. As we have observed, the role of image and metaphor is played in John 5 by the 'sign' which, acting in the same way as the imagery in earlier narratives, takes on symbolic character. The same is true of the Sabbath, which is integrated into the healing and itself becomes a symbol of the life that Jesus brings. As the narrative/discourse progresses, the symbolism unfolds through conflict and debate. The symbol emerges through the healing miracle, and its aggressive aftermath, precisely as it occurs on the Sabbath.[4]

1. Beutler, *Martyria*, pp. 254-55, sees the unity of Jn 5 as evidenced in both form and content; nevertheless, he does not analyse it in narrative categories. See above, p. 100.

2. Schnackenburg, II, p. 91.

3. It is interesting to note that Lindars (p. 208) in his view of the composition history of the Gospel, suggests a two-stage theory in which Jn 5, 7 and 8 were part of the first edition. Certainly these chapters are less effective, from a narrative perspective, than other parts of the first half of the Gospel.

4. This differs from Jn 9 where, though the Sabbath issue is important (9.14), the main focus is on the healing (see 9.11, 15b; also 9.26). At the same time, it is

Scene 1: Healing—Stage 1 (vv. 1-9)

Scene 1 of the narrative is concerned with the establishing of the 'sign' (Stage 1). This takes place in the healing of the man (vv. 1-9a) and in the disclosure that it has taken place on the Sabbath (v. 9b), which together make up the σημεῖον. In assuming that Jesus is offering to help him into the Pool (v. 6), the man is unprepared for a direct and miraculous healing which will involve him in a breach of the Sabbath (vv. 8-9). He responds to Jesus' question in v. 6 by his willingness to obey Jesus' commands (v. 8). Nevertheless, Jesus' question also finds the reader wondering how much the man really desires the wholeness that Jesus has to offer (ὑγιής, v. 6). Nothing more is said at this stage, however, of the man's understanding. All that is established is the two-fold aspect of the 'sign': in obeying Jesus the man has been physically healed, and in the process has broken the Sabbath.

Scene 2: Conflict—Stages 2 to 3 (vv. 10-18)

Stage 2 begins in scene 2 and involves both the healed man and the religious authorities. The latter are introduced into the narrative to resolve the theological dilemma caused by Jesus healing the man on the Sabbath and commanding him to take his mattress and walk (v. 8). The accusation that the man has broken the Sabbath (v. 10) shows their misunderstanding. As in previous narratives, however, misunderstanding at this early stage does not signify rejection of Jesus or his actions. Indeed it has an essential role in the unfolding of the narrative. Like other characters in the Fourth Gospel, the religious leaders have interpreted the event on a literal level, which is a necessary Stage in the emergence of the symbolic meaning.

Verse 11 takes the narrative to Stage 3. Both the healed man and the authorities embark on the struggle to make sense of what has occurred. The focus moves at once to the identity of Jesus, which is part of the struggle for understanding in this Stage of the narrative (vv. 11-15). Under interrogation of the authorities, the man knows nothing of Jesus, except that the latter has healed him (vv. 12-13). Jesus therefore reveals himself to the man in v. 14 and points to a deeper healing that he requires (μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε, ἵνα μὴ χεῖρόν

clear that in John 9 the narrator presupposes the insights of Jn 5 in relation to Jesus' Sabbath work. It is less prominent in Jn 9 for precisely this reason. As readers of the Gospel we know already, on the basis of Jn 5, that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath, far from indicating that he is ἁμαρτωλός, reveals that he is truly παρὰ θεοῦ.

σοί τι γένηται). Exegetically, the verse is problematical because of the difficulty in knowing why Jesus commands him not to 'go on sinning' (note the present tense of the imperative). Here the text appears to assume a physiological link between sin and suffering (see Mk 2.1-12).[1] An alternative interpretation, from the perspective of the narrative, sees Jesus' statement in relation to the following verse (v. 15), where the man collaborates with the authorities against Jesus. With prophetic insight, Jesus identifies a more serious problem in the man's character than that of physical disability: 'It is clear that, while he is healed of his illness, he still suffers an illness of the spirit which is reflected in his lack of gratitude and his betrayal of Jesus to the authorities.'[2] The narrative confirms Jesus' insight. Once he discovers the identity of his healer, the man reports it at once to the authorities (v. 15).[3] He does not comprehend the symbolic nature either of the healing or his healer.[4] He passes responsibility to the authorities who now become the leading actors in the drama. In these verses, the man reveals himself as a character who is timid to the point of betrayal.[5]

The dialogue between the healed man and the authorities moves the narrative focus from the healed man to Jesus, from the man's breach of the Sabbath (v. 10) to that of Jesus (v. 16). In v. 16 the authorities

1. See Barrett, p. 255: 'It is neither said nor implied that the man's illness was the consequence of sin.' Furthermore, John 9.3 denies any such link in the case of the man born blind. Against this view of 5.14, cf. Schnackenburg, II, p. 240-41; Brown, I, p. 208; and Carson, pp. 245-46.

2. Kysar, p. 78.

3. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, p. 211) notes that twice the man walks away from Jesus, demonstrating his lack of interest in faith. According to her schema, the fourth step ('Bekenntnis') is missing in each of the three levels (pp. 209-11).

4. According to L.Th. Witkamp ('The Use of Traditions in John 5.1-18', *JSNT* 25 [1985], p. 24) the man misunderstands from the beginning 'the real significance of Jesus' intervention and sees him only as a helpful passer-by; he never moves beyond this'.

5. Brown (I, p. 209) regards the healed man as unimaginative, obtuse and without initiative; he sees him as guilty not of treachery but of 'persistent naïveté'. In a different vein, see Haenchen, I, pp. 245-48, who regards the man as a pawn in a composition whose aim is to bring Jesus and the 'Jews' into open conflict. See also Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 71-72. While the character of the man is not as fully developed as other characters in the Fourth Gospel, his passivity and timidity—before as well as after the healing—have a role to play in the narrative. Cf. Staley, 'Stumbling in the Dark', pp. 634, who sees the man as naïve and imperfect rather than a negative character in the narrative.

now begin to respond in a polemical way (note the inceptive use of the imperfect ἐδίωκον). Until this point, their questioning, though confrontative, has not yet denoted overt hostility. Significantly the verb διώκω which describes their reaction follows immediately on the disclosure of Jesus' identity in v. 15: the shift from interrogation to persecution is linked to the healed man's betrayal of Jesus' identity. The authorities begin to respond in a negative way to this disclosure (v. 16). They fail to understand that, precisely because of his identity, Jesus' action cannot be interpreted as contempt for the Law. Thus, through their misunderstanding of who Jesus is, they begin to regard him as a law-breaker. While their questioning of Jesus, therefore, is part of the struggle to understand, it points, at the same time, in a negative direction.

Significance of the Sabbath. Stage 3 continues as Jesus goes on to clarify the symbolic meaning of the Sabbath healing. Verse 17 is arguably the central text for the narrative as well as the basis for the discourse which follows: ὁ πατήρ μου ἕως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται, κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι.[1] The key concept is the Johannine understanding of ἔργον in the context of Jesus' ministry:

> This context [of Jesus' persecution] gives a particular resonance to the idea of work/works (ἔργον/ἔργα) which is a key concept in the Gospel... For what follows it is crucial that the healing miracle should have occurred on the Sabbath and that it should have been viewed as a Sabbath-breaking work.[2]

Here in v. 17 the 'sign' through the narrative begins to take on an explicitly symbolic character. It is now revealed as an event of profound christological significance. Jesus' breach of the Sabbath reveals not that he has broken the Law, but that he is engaged in carrying out the Sabbath work of God.

Behind Jesus' explanation of his action in v. 17 lie Jewish traditions of God's unceasing providential activity, which continues on the Sabbath. Jewish writers of the period show awareness of the theological problem of God's Sabbath rest at the end of creation (Gen. 2.2-3; also Exod. 20.11; 31.17). They offer various explanations which would permit the deity to rest on the Sabbath without the created

1. So Painter, 'Text and Context', p. 28.
2. Painter, 'Text and Context', p. 28.

order grinding to a halt. In Philo, for example, God's rest is perpetual but not inactive: τὴν ἄνευ κακοπαθείας μετὰ πολλῆς εὐμαρείας ἀπονωτάτην ἐνέργειαν.[1] God can never be inactive since ἀρχὴ τοῦ δρᾶν ἐστιν.[2] In some Rabbinic writing, God's work of creating finishes on the Sabbath, but not the work of punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. In others, God is permitted to work within the world on the Sabbath because it is the divine dwelling.[3] Whatever the explanation, it is clear that the evangelist is drawing on traditions of God's work on the Sabbath which in some way transcends the normal Sabbath regulations. John's claim here is that Jesus shares the same divine exemption.

In the process of clarifying this point, the narrator sets the 'sign' of the Sabbath healing within the same framework as the images of the Gospel. Both work metaphorically. Just as the literal meaning collapses in order to disclose a second metaphorical meaning, so the σημεῖον produces a similar dynamic: Jesus' healing of the man suggests, on the literal level, a breaking of the Law. This corresponds to the collapse of the literal meaning in metaphor. On the symbolic level, however, Jesus' breach of the Sabbath signifies that the work he is doing is the work of God, who goes on giving life and judging even on the Sabbath. Jesus is setting himself apart from all other human beings, claiming a status, privilege and responsibility possessed by no other except God.[4] This is the second level meaning which emerges once the contradiction in the first level meaning is exposed. On a literal level the 'sign' signifies that Jesus has broken the Law; on a symbolic level it means that Jesus is engaged in doing the ἔργον of God (see 9.16, 31-33). That he should break the Law is, in Johannine terms, absurd. That he is the reality to which it points symbolically is the truth that the narrator challenges the 'Jews' to grasp.

The struggle between Jesus and the authorities continues in v. 18, where the misunderstanding deepens in response to Jesus' clarification of the 'sign'. Their anger escalates. Instead of persecution (διώκω, v. 16), the 'Jews' now want to murder Jesus (ἀποκτείνω, v. 18).

1. Philo, *De cher.* 87 (88-90).
2. Philo, *Leg. all.* 1.3.
3. So *Gen. Rab.* 11.10 and *Exod. Rab.* 30.9. On this, see Haenchen, I, pp. 248-49, and Barrett, p. 256.
4. So W.R.G. Loader, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Structure and Issues* (BET, 23; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 161-62.

Verse 18b gives the reason: they are enraged by Jesus' claim that God is ὁ πατήρ μου whose Sabbath work he carries out. This is itself an example of misunderstanding. The authorities assume that Jesus is setting himself up as a rival to God, or at least as God's equal: ἀλλὰ καὶ πατέρα ἴδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεόν, ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ. In other words, as Bultmann points out, they interpret equality with God as independence from God.[1] Whereas in John 4.1-42 misunderstanding led to understanding on the part of the heterodox Samaritans through the Stages of the narrative, in John 5 the misunderstanding of the 'Jews' is intensified by Jesus' explication of the symbol. While it is part of the struggle of Stage 3, the reader is now aware that the authorities are moving towards the rejection of a symbolic understanding.

Scene 3: Jesus' Discourse—Stages 3 to 5 (vv. 19-47)

As a result of deteriorating relations between Jesus and the 'Jews', and the deepening hostility of their struggle, Jesus attempts to correct their misapprehension of his relationship with God (in vv. 19-20).[2] Speaking of the role delegated to him by God which lies at the basis of his Sabbath ἔργον, Jesus uses what is probably a parable of a son apprenticed to his father (vv. 19-20a).[3] The parable, according to Dodd, consists of a tableau of father and son at work:

> The son watches his father at work and imitates him; the father shows the son all the several operations of his craft, so that, by closely following the father's example, rather than experimenting at his own sweet will (ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ) he may himself become a master of the craft.[4]

The main purpose of the verses is to reinforce and develop the point that Jesus' work is no less than God's work. As an apprenticed son learns everything by watching his father at work, so Jesus is

1. So Bultmann, p. 245. See also Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 327.

2. Brown (I, p. 214) sees a relationship in v. 19 with Moses' words at Num. 16.28.

3. On this, see C. H. Dodd, 'A Hidden Parable in the Fourth Gospel', in *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1968), pp. 30-40. Dodd argues that the article (ὁ υἱός, ὁ πατήρ) is used here in a generic way (p. 31). See Brown, I, p. 218; and Lindars, p. 221; also Talbert, pp. 121-30, who entitles his discussion of Jn 5 as 'dutiful apprentice of the Father'. Against this view, cf. Beasley-Murray, p. 75, and Schnackenburg, II, pp. 1-2, 462.

4. Dodd, 'Hidden Parable', p. 31.

dependent for his work on God, his Father.[1]

In terms of the narrative, the parable is a response to the authorities' misunderstanding of Jesus as God's equal. Jesus has not claimed equality with God, at least not in the sense the authorities understand it.[2] On the contrary, he asserts vigorously in these verses that the work he does is not his own, either to initiate or carry out. It is the Father's work from beginning to end.[3] It is precisely because Jesus' ministry is subordinate to the work and will of God—because it is God's work and not his own—that the σημεῖον cannot be understood as an infringement of the Law. This is the sense in which we are to understand vv. 19-20a. Jesus carries out God's work in 'apprenticeship' to the Father. Seen in this light, his actions cannot rightly be construed as a breach of the Law.

Giving Life and Judging. The verses that follow provide a commentary on the parable, as Jesus develops further the symbolic meaning in christological terms (vv. 20b-29). They are also closely linked to the healing of the man (as well as to the previous 'sign',

1. Questions of the ontological relationship between the Father and Son are of secondary importance here. As Bultmann (p. 249) points out, John's interests are primarily soteriological.

2. As Haenchen shows (I, p. 249). See Loader, *Christology*, p. 162: 'This is not a statement about equality in the sense that it could be reversed to read: The Father can do nothing except what he sees the Son doing. The notion of equality is heavily qualified by the notion of dependence.' In Loader's view, Jesus is subordinate to God in his being, but equal in his work (p. 162). See also Talbert, p. 124, and Carson, pp. 249-51. Against this, cf. J.H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt: John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), p. 22, who argues that the evangelist is concerned to show Jesus as 'unequivocally equal to God'; indeed he sees Jesus' equality with God as a major theme of the Fourth Gospel and part of its 'high' christology (pp. 9-10, 18-36, 94-112). Duprez (*Les dieux guérisseurs*, p. 147) makes an important point here: 'Le scandale ne vient pas de ce qu'il appelle Dieu "son Père", ce qu'il avait déjà fait lors de la purification du temple... mais de ce qu'il s'égale à Dieu en s'arrogeant le droit d' enfreindre le sabbat.'

3. Beasley-Murray (p. 75) captures the two-sided dynamic of these verses: 'on the one hand there is the acknowledgement by Jesus of the total dependence of the Son on the Father, and on the other a consciousness of the Father's appointment of the Son to perform on his behalf works that God alone has the right and power to execute...'. J.T. Forestell (*The Word of the Cross: Salvation as Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* [AnBib, 57; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1974], p. 51) sees vv. 19-30 as an *inclusio* emphasising Jesus' dependence on the Father.

4.46-54[1]).[2] Here Jesus clarifies the precise nature of the divine work which, in obedience to God's will, it is his task to perform. Jesus is the giver of life on behalf of God, for which the healing on the Sabbath, in particular, is a symbol.[3] God is the source of life (Ps. 36.9), not only in creation but above all in the giving of ζωὴ αἰώνιος, which effects the transition from death to life (v. 24) and vivifies the dead (v. 25).[4] Thus it is the life of God which Jesus possesses within himself (v. 26) and which he has the delegated power to give to mortal beings (vv. 21, 25, 28-29). In terms of Stage 3 of the narrative, the explication of Jesus' identity and that of the 'sign' go together: the transition from death to life is the movement from a literal to a symbolic understanding of the person and work (ἔργον) of Jesus. It is the movement from unbelief to faith.

This part of the discourse is concerned equally with judgment,[5] which is the other side of Jesus' gift of life and is also integral to the symbolic meaning of the 'sign'. The two themes of life-giving and judging are 'balanced against one another throughout'.[6] Indeed, an important title given to Jesus in these verses is that of υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου (anarthrous here, possibly reflecting Dan. 7.13, LXX[7]). The title 'Son

1. So Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 318.

2. This can be seen in the repetition of the verb ἐγείρω in vv. 8 and 21; so Haenchen, I, p. 251, who sees the healing of the man and the idea of resurrection as linked together, and Beasley-Murray, pp. 73-74. Both see the two miracles (4.46-54 and 5.1-9) as pre-emptive of the raising of Lazarus (ch. 11), the greatest of the Johannine 'signs' where the theme of Jesus as life-giver reaches a climax in this half of the Gospel. See Brown, I, pp. 220, 423, 434 and 437.

3. Brown (I, p. 214) says that the healing is 'merely a sign of the power to give eternal life'; so also Schnackenburg, II, p. 98. Against this, cf. Bultmann, p. 246, who strangely denies any link between the healing and life-giving roles of the Revealer.

4. Schnackenburg (II, p. 109) points out that the image for passing from death to life in v. 24 is that of a change of abode.

5. Philo (*Quaest. in Exod.* 2.68) draws a parallel distinction between the two divine powers, both related to the Logos: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ θείου λόγου, καθάπερ ἀπὸ πηγῆς, σχίζονται αἱ δύο δυνάμεις. Ἡ μὲν ποιητική, καθ' ἣν ἔθηκε τὰ πάντα καὶ διεκόσμησεν ὁ τεχνίτης, αὕτη θεὸς ὀνομάζεται· ἡ δὲ βασιλική, καθ' ἣν ἄρχει τῶν γεγονότων ὁ δημιουργός, αὕτη καλεῖται κύριος (also *De Fuga* 5.100). See Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 322-24, and Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, pp. 22-29.

6. Moloney, *Son of Man*, p. 77.

7. So Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 81-82.

of Man' clarifies the use of 'Son' in vv. 21-23,[1] setting it in the context of revelation and judgment.[2] It presents Jesus as eschatological Judge on God's behalf (v. 27),[3] a function which in John's Gospel is largely, though not wholly, realised in the present (see vv. 24-25 and vv. 28-29).[4]

Though the evangelist's terminology in these verses is at points ambiguous, judgment seems to refer for the most part to condemnation. This is certainly the case at v. 24 (εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται), at v. 29 (εἰς ἀνάστασιν κρίσεως) and also probably at v. 22, which seems to present the other side of Jesus' life-giving in v. 21.[5] Verses 27 and 30 are again ambiguous, though the idea of κρίσις has broadened to include the positive as well as negative dimensions of the role of judge (acquittal/condemnation). Both aspects are probably present in v. 30, which serves as a summary for the previous section of the discourse (vv. 19-29). Either way, however, the point remains the same. On the basis of his status and identity ('Son', 'Son of Man'), Jesus bears responsibility for carrying out the two-fold task of the divine Judge: to give life and to pronounce judgment.[6]

How then does this reference to judgment (in its negative sense)

1. I have avoided the translation 'Human One' because, although it is more inclusive, it fails to convey the verbal play in Jn 5 between 'son' and 'son of Man'.

2. According to Moloney (*Son of Man*, pp. 71, 83-84) whereas 'son' is used in contexts dealing with the relationship between the Father and the Son, 'son of Man' is concerned with Jesus' exercise of judgment.

3. As Bernard points out (I, p. 240), this is dependent on the OT picture of God having the power of life and death: e.g. Deut. 32.39; 1 Sam. 2.6; 2 Kgs 5.7, Wis. 16.13.

4. Brown (I, pp. 218-20) regards vv. 19-25 and vv. 26-30 as duplicate versions of the same discourse, the one representing a realised and the other a future eschatology (also pp. xxvi-xxvii). Against this, cf. Barrett, p. 258, and Schnackenburg, II, p. 116. Lindars (p. 221) speaks helpfully of the two dimensions as exemplifying an 'anticipated' rather than a 'thoroughgoing realized' eschatology. Not unexpectedly, Haenchen (I, p. 252) following Bultmann (p. 261) sees vv. 27-29 as contradicting the eschatology of the evangelist.

5. See also 3.17-19 where the verb κρίνω is used in the negative sense 'condemn', as against σώζω which expresses the positive side of Jesus' mission.

6. The contradiction with 8.15 is purely formal (see 5.16). Jesus' coming is not primarily to give judgment (see 3.16). That is a secondary result of the refusal to accept the revelation. See Schnackenburg, II, p. 105 who points out that vv. 19-30 are dominated not by judgment, but by the theme of giving life: 'God's saving will always prevails over his judgment.'

relate to Jesus' clarification of the 'sign' as part of the struggle of Stage 3? At first glance the notion of judgment seems out of place and superfluous to the narrative. But that is not the case. It relates firstly to the authorities who are moving towards rejection of Jesus and who stand therefore under God's judgment. This will become explicit in the later parts of the discourse. Jesus' healing action on the Sabbath challenges the 'Jews' in their attitude to, and interpretation of, the Law. It exposes their understanding as life-denying. Their concern is wholly with the legal technicalities, while the fact that a chronically sick man has been healed is irrelevant. Indeed their interpretation of the Law would have prevented the healing in the first place. For the evangelist, therefore, an essential aspect of Jesus' Sabbath ἔργον is the pronouncing of God's judgment on a narrow understanding of the Law which is concerned to protect the legalities, while denying life to a sick man.

At the same time, judgment also relates to the experience of the healed man, particularly in v. 14. As we have seen, it is strange in the narrative of scene 2 that Jesus suddenly introduces the subject of sin in his conversation with the man. There is, however, a vital link between Jesus' warning in v. 14 and his function as Judge in the discourse (vv. 22, 27, 29).[1] In the man's response, the evangelist is indicating here, as elsewhere, his conviction that true sin begins at the point of one's rejection of Jesus (see 9.41). In this sense, the symbol consists of both the man's healing and Jesus' warning. Here in the narrative Jesus is engaged in the work of God in its two-sided dimension: giving life (healing) and judging (warning).[2] The 'sign' points symbolically to both aspects of Jesus' work as explicated in the discourse.[3]

From this it can be seen that the function of the discourse is to draw out the meaning of narrative and symbol for the authorities. Verses 20b-30 clarify the meaning of the symbol on the basis of the implicit

1. See Lindars, pp. 219, 223, and Schnackenburg, II, p. 98. For Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 115, the way in which the man informs on Jesus prefigures the informing of the 'Jews' at 11.46 and the betrayal of Judas. This suggests that the man is acting not out of innocence and naïvety (cf. Brown, I, p. 209), but rather knowledge. See also Collins, 'Representative Figures I', pp. 42-43.

2. See Lindars, p. 217.

3. Both Schnackenburg (II, p. 97) and Hoskyns (p. 266) relate the healing to forgiveness. However, this may be reading too much into the warning at v. 14. The language of forgiveness is not part of the discourse.

question raised by Jesus' claims in vv. 17, 19-20: if Jesus does the work of God, what then is the nature of that work? The answer is that Jesus carries out the eschatological work of God—judging and giving life—which is radically present in the Sabbath activities of Jesus (vv. 24-27).[1] Here there is a close link between eschatology and christology.[2] 'Christology is the root of eschatology; eschatology is the outworking of the Christology of the only Son of the Father.'[3] In this sense, Jesus plays the same role eschatologically as he does in creation (1.3). As divine Logos, he carries out the creative and salvific work of God, making the divine ἔργον/ἔργα accessible to the material world. This represents a 'community of activity' between God and Jesus (see 1.1),[4] which involves an 'exact parallelism' between Father and Son, emphasised in the ὥσπερ...οὕτως construction of vv. 21 and 28.[5] Here again in the narrative, Jesus acts as the authentic symbol of God.

Theme of Witness (Stage 4). The symbolism underlying the first part of the discourse is undergirded, as we have seen, by the second part (vv. 31-40). Although the imagery changes from the Sabbath ἔργον of Jesus to forensic images, there is a close parallel between the two. The Johannine concept of μαρτυρία, on which these verses turn, parallels the way in which σάρξ operates as symbolic of the divine. The evangelist, as we have noted, speaks of the witness of the Father to Jesus (v. 31),[6] through the witness of John the Baptist (vv. 33, 35),[7]

1. According to H. Weiss ("The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel' *JBL* 110 [1991], pp. 311-21), the evangelist 'eschatologises' the Sabbath for his community; everyday is now the Sabbath in which believers perform the works of the Son.

2. Schnackenburg, II, p. 99.

3. Beasley-Murray, p. 80.

4. Schnackenburg, II, p. 103, who adds: 'God, who is invisible and transcendent, is... seen to act through the incarnate Logos, his Son, in whom he is present with his will, his word and his work'.

5. Barrett, p. 260.

6. It is clear that ἄλλος refers here to the Father's witness; so Beutler, *Martyria*, p. 257. J.M. Boice, *Witness and Revelation in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1970), p. 79, speaks of the Father's witness as having a 'plurality of forms'.

7. Beutler (*Martyria*, p. 258) sees the reference to the witness as an *argumentum ad hominem*. Although he gives no weight to human testimony, Jesus uses the witness of the Baptist for the sake of his audience.

the ἔργα of Jesus (v. 36),[1] and the Scriptures (v. 39).[2] These are meaningful only as they testify to a reality beyond themselves (see 3.28-30) and lead to faith.[3] In this sense, they function like the symbols, which likewise derive their meaning from the transcendent reality which they convey. Thus vv. 31-40 reveal a consonance between the language of symbol and the forensic terminology of the witness theme. Both exemplify the same relationship between God and Jesus, between the human and the divine, that we have found earlier in John 5.

At the same time, as we have observed, there are distinctive narrative elements in this section of the discourse. From a narrative perspective, Jesus' attack on the 'Jews' in this and the following parts of the discourse is suggestive of the final two Stages of the narrative. The witness of John the Baptist (v. 35) has been rejected and in vv. 38b-40 Jesus speaks openly of the authorities' rejection of himself. Here the 'Jews' have rejected Jesus as the giver of life to whom the Scriptures witness. What is rejected here is in fact the symbolic significance of the 'sign' which points to Jesus' life-giving role in carrying out the Sabbath work of God. Although the rejection of the 'Jews' takes place indirectly in Jesus' monologue, it parallels the fourth Stage of symbolic narrative.

The process continues in the final section of the discourse (vv. 41-47). Jesus begins now to speak of two different kinds of δόξα. Because he carries out not his own but God's work, Jesus seeks δόξα not from the world (παρὰ ἀνθρώπων, v. 41) but from God. On the other hand, the 'Jews' (ὑμεῖς) seek only that δόξα which is παρὰ ἀλλήλων (v. 44).[4] Here δόξα is used in the sense of 'praise/affirmation/good opinion', though it is linked to its usual sense in John, where it is synonymous with the divine presence. In these

1. According to Beutler (*Martyria*, pp. 259-60) the 'works' of Jesus testify to the unity between Father and Son. This makes another link with vv. 19-30.

2. P. Borgen, 'Creation, Logos and the Son: Observations on John 1.1-18 and 5.17-18', *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987), p. 97, who sees the narrative of 5.1-18 as an initiation story, describes entry into the Johannine community as perceiving 'the law of Moses and the whole Jewish context as a witness to Jesus, the Son of God'.

3. For Hindley ('Witness', p. 337) μαρτυρία is finally 'an invitation to discipleship: to move step by step towards faith affirmation'.

4. This is a serious condition in Bultmann's view, since for him the seeking of glory 'from one another' describes the fallen human condition (p. 272).

verses, and the negative comparison which they convey,[1] the rejection of Jesus by the authorities is made more explicit. To desire the δόξα that comes παρὰ ἀλληλων rather than παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ (v. 44; see 12.43), is to locate truth and meaning only within the material world. It is to seek δόξα within the closed world of σάρξ, in which flesh exists only in and for itself. In the Johannine worldview, however, δόξα belongs by right to the divine realm. This reflects the fundamental opposition that exists between unenlightened σάρξ and the revelation of Jesus. For the evangelist, only in a symbolic understanding of σάρξ can the divine δόξα shine through. Only through σάρξ can the healing and life-giving power of God become a reality for human life. It is precisely this insight that the authorities reject.

Judgment Against the 'Jews' (Stage 5). At this point, we begin to perceive the significance of the misunderstanding of the authorities in vv. 10-18. Essentially what the 'Jews' misunderstand is their own Law (vv. 45-47). For the evangelist, the Law finds its meaning in pointing symbolically to Jesus: εἰ γάρ ἐπιστεύετε Μωϋσεῖ, ἐπιστεύετε ἂν ἐμοί, περὶ γὰρ ἐμοῦ ἐκεῖνος ἔγραψεν (v. 46). The Torah acts like a Johannine 'sign' or image, the meaning of which is to be found in symbolic relation to Jesus. This is where Jesus begins to turn the tables on his opponents. The Law which the 'Jews' have used to condemn Jesus for breaking the Sabbath (v. 16) is the instrument by which they themselves are condemned. Jesus' breach of the Sabbath is an action signifying judgment on the authorities' false and life-denying interpretation of the Law. Unless it is apprehended symbolically of Jesus as the giver of life, however, the Law itself is distorted and misunderstood, and ultimately rejected.[2]

Although we have moved beyond the story of the healing, there is a strong suggestion of narrative in these closing verses. On the one hand there are symbolic elements present around the issue of the Law, which is the central focus of scene 2 arising out of the healing in scene 1. The symbol of Jesus' Sabbath work is implicit in the significance

1. Schnackenburg (II, p. 127) points to the contrast in the OT between the prophet who speaks in God's name (Deut. 18.19) and the false prophets like Shemaiah who speak in their own name (Jer. 29.25).

2. See Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 119: 'the Johannine evaluation of those who reject Jesus is that they are not loyal to their own tradition and are totally alienated from God'.

given to the Torah. Furthermore vv. 45-47 parallel the last Stage of the narrative: the statement of rejection is made through the figure of Moses who, at the climax of the discourse, speaks out against the 'Jews'. They are condemned by their own Law and their inability to perceive its symbolic function in relation to Jesus. The condemnation that this involves parallels the conclusion of 9.39-41 which is part of the fifth Stage of the narrative. Although in John 5 the statement of rejection occurs within the discourse and is not spoken by the 'Jews', it shadows the final narrative Stage. By the end of John 5 the rejection of Jesus by the 'Jews' of this narrative is complete.

D. *Conclusion*

From this analysis, we can conclude that in many respects the elements of symbolic narrative are present in John 5. The first three Stages are fully present in the narrative and throughout the first part of the discourse section. The final two Stages are actualised not in narrative but in the form of discourse (parts 2 and 3). Acting as Judge, Jesus articulates the response of the authorities. Along with Moses and the Law he pronounces judgment upon them. To the extent that the 'Jews' do not speak and act for themselves in this section, however, the drama is impoverished and its effect weakened. The less effective the integration of form and content, the less persuasive is the Johannine worldview for the implied reader. John 5, therefore, is not a complete narrative. In diachronic terms, as we have noted, John 5 may well represent an early attempt at a form which is more highly developed in other (later) symbolic narratives.

In spite of the partial character of John 5 as symbolic narrative, it nevertheless shows the distinctive features of the form. The five narrative Stages are identifiable, even if the latter two are in sketchy form. Furthermore it is remarkable how the 'sign' takes on symbolic meaning through narrative and discourse, illustrating the importance of recognising and taking seriously narrative elements, even within the discourse. This is particularly true of the Sabbath which becomes a profound symbol for the mission and ministry of Jesus. There is a fundamental link between the first two narrative scenes and the discourse; both together draw out the symbolic meaning. John 5 also demonstrates that even with a negative response from the leading characters, the symbolism is still able to emerge from the narrative.

Whether negatively or positively, it is the interaction between the central characters and Jesus which creates the narrative and allows its inherent symbolism to emerge. Thus, although literary form and theological meaning are not as fully integrated as in other symbolic narratives, the interaction between the two is still clearly discernible.

In spite of its difficulties, John 5 has still the power to draw the implied reader into the dynamic of the narrative. Unlike the previous two symbolic narratives, John 5 challenges the reader's faith in opposition to the central characters. The reader is challenged to embrace the symbolic significance of Jesus as the one who carries out the Sabbath work of God in giving life and judging. By exposing the weakness of the sick man and, more particularly, the inadequacy of the authorities' response, the implied author summons the reader, through negative identification, to respond to Jesus' mission in a radically different way. She is encouraged to react positively to the symbolic meaning over against the main characters. In terms of reader response, this is a negative way of achieving what has occurred positively through the previous two narratives in the examples of John the Baptist and the Samaritans.

Relationship Between σάρξ *and* πνεῦμα

In what sense does John 5 demonstrate the relationship between σάρξ and πνεῦμα/δόξα as outlined in the Prologue (1.14)? As we have seen, the symbols operate on two levels: they belong to the material realm yet on another level disclose a life that transcends human existence. The encounter between Jesus and the protagonists in symbolic narrative represents the challenge (κρίσις) to respond in faith to the revelation. To reject the challenge means the failure to understand the image/'sign' as symbol. Although John 5 is not, as I have shown, so fully developed a narrative as others in the Gospel of John, it nevertheless reveals the same incarnational perspective.

It is not difficult to perceive that the 'sign' belongs to the domain of σάρξ. The healing belongs to the material realm in that it is the healing of the man's σάρξ. Like the water that Jesus offers the Samaritan woman (4.10, 13-14), it too discloses two levels of meaning. On the first level, it relates to basic human needs; in this case, the cure of a physical disability. Jesus' action in healing the man, when interpreted on a σάρξ level, is simply an act of physical restoration. Within the Johannine framework, however, its real

function is to symbolise the work of the one who communicates a transcendent life. As symbol, it challenges human beings to believe that the 'disabilities' of the human condition are capable of being 'healed' in a deeper sense, through the life-giving work of Jesus. It is this insight into the symbolic nature of the healing—the second level meaning—which the healed man fails to attain and the 'Jews' finally reject.

In John's Gospel, there are thus two possible reactions to Jesus: belief, whether it arises through 'signs' or images, and rejection, whether or not people accept Jesus' σημεῖα.[1] Significantly, the mere acceptance of the 'signs', though it may be a step on the journey to faith, is not in itself faith. This is the situation of the man in John 5. By failing to move beyond his experience of Jesus as a physical healer, he ends up on the side of the religious authorities who reject Jesus as the giver of life. In John's symbolic worldview, the failure to attain a symbolic interpretation of the healing is really the failure to perceive the divine δόξα in the σάρξ. It is the incapacity to grasp the meaning of the incarnation. For the healed man, therefore, very little has changed. Jesus' challenging question in v. 6—θέλεις ὑγιὴς γενέθαι;—is finally answered in the negative. The man is unable to see beyond the needs of σάρξ. True healing is ultimately denied him: in a sense, he has 'judged' himself.

The symbolic role of the Sabbath operates in the same way, presenting the same challenge to faith. Jesus' action in healing the man on the Sabbath is misunderstood by the 'Jews' as a breach of the Law (vv. 16, 18). They fail to understand his unique relationship with the Father (vv. 17-18). Just as the physical healing acts as a symbol for the 'healing' of mortality, so the Sabbath action of Jesus is a symbol pointing to a transcendent, christological reality. If perceived symbolically, the creative ἔργα of God can be recognised at play,

1. In his discussion of the σημεῖα of the Fourth Gospel, Brown (I, pp. 530-31) identifies four different reactions to the 'signs' throughout the Gospel: those who refuse to perceive them with faith, those who accept Jesus as a wonder-worker, those who see them and believe, and those who believe without seeing. For a summary of different views on the relationship of faith to the 'signs', see Koester, 'Hearing', pp. 327-28. Faith, as he points out, is not necessarily dependent on 'signs'. These are used by the evangelist to confirm faith (p. 348). However, Koester fails to perceive that the imagery acts in a way that parallels the 'signs' (pp. 335-36).

acting within and at the same time transcending the material world. The authorities reject such a symbolic understanding, assuming that Jesus is working ἀφ' ἐμαυτοῦ (v. 30) and not παρὰ θεοῦ. They fail to see the Sabbath ἔργον as a symbol of the life-giving and judging activity of God.

Once again, their perspective is that of σάρξ unenlightened by the divine πνεῦμα. They have a materialistic view which fails to perceive the world, through the ministry of Jesus, as the place of God's life-giving activity. In this way, Jesus' action in breaking the Sabbath challenges their religious understanding. For the evangelist, the Law in their hands has become life-denying, an obstacle in the way of life. In healing the man on the Sabbath, Jesus reveals not only that he is 'from God' and shares God's work, but also that the 'Jewish' understanding of the Law is distorted. In order to give life, Jesus exposes this false understanding by his 'breach' of the Sabbath. The two actions of Jesus in the narrative—healing and breaking the Sabbath—point to the life-giving and judging functions of God. Jesus reveals life through the healing and enacts judgment through challenging the authorities' materialistic and life-denying attitude to the Law.

The relationship between σάρξ and δόξα has a further dimension in regard to the symbolism of the Sabbath in John 5. As we discover in the latter part of the discourse, this relates directly to the role of the Hebrew Scriptures. As we saw earlier, the references to the Scriptures and to Moses (vv. 39, 45-47) bring us back almost in full circle to the conflict over the Sabbath at the beginning, so that by the end of John 5 we realise that the Sabbath stands for the Torah, as represented by Moses. Extraordinary as it may seem, the Scriptures themselves share the same two levels of meaning inherent in the symbols. Their function is to point symbolically to the glory of God as manifested in the work of Jesus. For the evangelist, the life-giving properties of the Torah belong in Jesus, to whom the Law points.[1]

It follows then that to interpret the Scriptures from anything other than a Johannine symbolic perspective is to misinterpret them.[2] This point of view is already set out in the Prologue: ὁ νόμος διὰ Μωϋσέως is contrasted with ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια διὰ Ἰησοῦ

1. So Schnackenburg, II, p. 125.

2. Barrett, p. 258, commenting on vv. 41-47 says that 'Judaism is rightly understood as a ministry of hope when allowed to point to Christ; when viewed as a closed and self-sufficient system it is a ministry of condemnation'.

Χριστοῦ (1.17). The Fourth Evangelist does not reject the Law, but rather reinterprets it as a symbol for 'grace and truth through Jesus Christ'. The Scriptures find their true meaning as symbolic of the life which is to be found in the revelation of Jesus (ζωὴ αἰώνιος). Those who search them without such understanding remain on the level of σάρξ, bereft of the vision of the divine δόξα revealed in Jesus (5.39-40; see 1.14). In the narrative of John 5, the two levels of meaning within the σημεῖον present alternative views of Jesus: either he is in material terms a law-breaker (σάρξ) or his ἔργα are recognised as the saving work of God (δόξα). To make the leap of faith is to move from a material to a symbolic understanding of the world. In the terminology of John 5, it means to 'hear the voice of the Son of God' (v. 25) calling human beings from death to life.[1]

1. Barrett (p. 261) speaks of the verb ἀκούω as used here in the sense of the Hebrew שמע, to 'hear and do'. Schnackenburg (II, p. 111) speaks also of ἀκούω as having the same *double entendre* as the verb to 'see'. For Koester ('Hearing', pp. 347-48) a perception based on hearing is superior to one based on seeing.

Chapter 5

JOHN 6.1-71: THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

Just as John 5 involves the complex, yet coherent integration of a Johannine 'sign' within the context of a Jewish feast (the Sabbath), so the narrative of John 6.1-71 displays a similar pattern. It focuses on the σημεῖον of the feeding (v. 14) in the context of the Jewish feast of Passover (v. 4). John 6 also adds the image of bread which is central to the narrative and with which both 'sign' and feast cohere, resembling in this respect the narrative of 4.1-42. Indeed the core imagery of both narratives are linked: water for drinking is paralleled in John 6 by bread for eating. Like the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, John 6 is also an example of symbolic narrative in its full form. The five Stages of the narrative are present as it takes on symbolic value, and the climax is reached in the final response of believers and unbelievers.

The narrative of John 6 has unique features which are not found in earlier narratives. In the first place, we encounter the first of the ἐγώ εἰμι sayings which are used in a predicative way in the Fourth Gospel within the context of metaphor.[1] Secondly, the revelation of Jesus'

1. There is a distinction between 'I am' sayings used absolutely (e.g. at 6.20; 8.24, 28, 58; 13.9; 18.5, 6, 8) and those used predicatively. Some sayings are at first glance simply a formula of identification (as at 9.9; 18.35) but on closer inspection belong within the former group. The context gives them the sense of divine epiphany (6.20; 18.5, 6, 8). The predicative use of ἐγώ εὐμι is found in a series of seven metaphorical statements (the bread of life, 6.35, 48, 51; the light of the world, 8.12, 9.5; the door/gate, 10.7, 9; the good shepherd, 10.11, 14; the resurrection and the life, 11.25; the way, the truth and the life, 14.6; and the true vine, 15.15). These are not just statements of Jesus' identity but describe, more fundamentally, his role in salvation. There are also several other sayings involving either a participle used substantively or an adverbial phrase which, though grammatically predicative, belong semantically with the absolute use of the term (e.g. 4.26; 8.18, 23); so

identity and mission progresses through the narrative in a more complex way than in previous narratives. This is seen in the way in which 'sign', image and feast are combined and tightly interwoven. Here we find the revelation increasing in intensity as well as complexity. Thirdly, the final response of the main characters is more varied than in previous symbolic narratives: acceptance and rejection are both present in a new and critical way. The rejection is narrated more carefully and dramatically than in John 5, so that by v. 60 the σκάνδαλον experienced by many of Jesus' followers takes on a distinctly tragic note.

The theme of John 6 is that Jesus is the true bread from heaven who offers life through his self-giving. For believers, life is be found only in 'feeding' on him. As we saw in 4.1-42, the language and imagery used to convey this throughout the narrative has its background in the conception of God as Sophia within Jewish Wisdom traditions (see especially 2 Esd. 1.9, 8.4, Wis. 16.20-21, Sir. 6.19, 15.3, 24.19-21; also Isa. 55.1-2).[1] This motif relates both to the image of bread and to the idea of feeding (see v. 5).[2] In particular, it is derived from the portrait of Wisdom as nourisher.[3] In this picture Sophia, like Jesus, both gives and is the gift offered: 'the one who offers nourishment is also presented a nourishment itself'.[4] Unlike Sophia, however, Jesus' self-giving takes place through incarnation and, as the narrative

Schnackenburg, II, p. 81. On these questions, and the OT and Hellenistic background of the term, see Bultmann, pp. 225-26; Brown, I, pp. 533-38; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 79-89; and Barrett, pp. 281, 341-42, 291-92.

1. A. Feuillet ('The Principles Themes in the Discourse on the Bread of Life', in *Johannine Studies* [New York: Alba House, 1964], pp. 57-102) identifies three biblical themes in the narrative: Wisdom's banquet, the messianic banquet and the manna. M. Kiley ('The Exegesis of God: Jesus' Signs in John 1-11', in D.J. Lull [ed.], *SBL 1988 Seminar Papers: The One Hundred Twenty-Fourth Annual Meeting* [SBLSPS, 27; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1988], pp. 555-69) sees the background of the 'sign' in Psalm 23.

2. On this see esp. Lindars, pp. 254-68, who emphasises this aspect of Jn 6. See also Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 116-19.

3. See Sandelin, *Wisdom as Nourisher*, pp. 177-85.

4. Sandelin, *Wisdom as Nourisher*, p. 178; also pp. 179-80. See G.A. Phillips, '"This is a Hard Saying. Who Can Be Listener to It?": Creating a Reader in John 6', *Semeia* 26 (1983), p. 53: 'the word *about* Jesus is at the same time the word *of* Jesus; words about life in this sense are living words'. See also M.J.J. Menken, 'John 6,51c-58: Eucharist or Christology?' *Bib* 74 (1993), p. 15.

discloses towards the end, through the cross.

The double motif of acceptance/rejection, as in the narratives of John 3 and 5, occurs within the context of Judaism. Of the two character groupings within John 6, the Galilaean crowd reject Jesus and the small inner circle of disciples accept him. As a result of their initial following of Jesus (1.35-51), the first 'sign' at Cana (2.1-12) and their inadequate response in 4.31-38, we expect to hear more about the faith of this group of disciples. They now re-appear in the narrative of John 6 where they play an important role. As Jesus' followers among the crowd fall away (vv. 60-65)—their alienation increasing as the revelation progressively unfolds—faith devolves more and more on the Twelve (vv. 66-70a), who are mentioned only here in the Fourth Gospel and at 20.24. Even among them, however, alienation and rejection are present in the betrayal of Judas Iscariot (vv. 70b-71).

Already we have observed that 'signs' in John's narratives play an analogous role to the imagery and find their true significance in a symbolic role. It is possible, therefore, to speak of a narrative equivalence between Johannine 'sign' and image. The image of water/the well in 4.1-42, for example, which arises out of Jesus' meeting with the woman at the well, plays an identical role to the image of bread, which arises out of the 'sign' of Jesus' feeding of the Five Thousand.[1] The same is true of the birth image in John 3 and the Sabbath healing in John 5. In John 6 'sign', image and feast all cohere into the one basic symbol, that of eating the bread of life. Again, as in other narratives, these are grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures and Judaism. In the narrative of Jesus as the bread of life, eating the bread (manna) in the context of Passover becomes, through the movement of the narrative, a single powerful symbol.

John 6 is a deliberate insertion of Galilaean material into the wider narrative of the Gospel, which otherwise represents a devolving of conflict on Jerusalem. It reaches the point where Jesus leaves Galilee permanently and moves to Judaea, significantly in secret, for fear of the 'Jews' (7.10). As the conflict between Jesus and the 'Jews' escalates in Jerusalem (John 5, 7-8), Galilee is drawn into the net. It too is seen

1. Odeberg (*Fourth Gospel*, pp. 238-39) comments that Jn 6 'moves in exactly the same sphere as ch. 3 and ch. 4 with regard to the conceptions of the "Birth from above", the Spiritual σπέρμα and the "Water of Life"'.

as part of the tide of hostility which finally engulfs Jesus.[1] For this reason, the narrative of John 6, while it may seem an intrusion into a self-contained block of Judaean controversy episodes, is an essential part of the motif of mounting hostility and rejection. In fact John 6–8 share the common theme of the 'scandal' that divides people (including disciples) in their response to Jesus, and re-unites them in rejection of him (see 6.60, 66; 8.31, 37, 48, 59).[2]

A. *Structure and Overview*

There are a number of problems which affect the narrative status and unity of John 6. The chapter division is not in question. However, the internal structure of John 6 is generally regarded as problematical. Do vv. 52-59 (or 51b/c-58) belong in the discourse,[3] or do they

1. Hoskyns (p. 278) points out that the unbelief of the Jerusalem 'Jews' in Jn 5 is immediately followed by the unbelief of the Galilaean 'Jews' in Jn 6 and that the two groups are contrasted with the Twelve (6.67-71).

2. Some scholars, as noted in the previous Chapter (see above, p. 100), argue that John 6 follows 4.(45)46-54 since it takes place in Galilee: e.g. Bultmann, pp. 209-10; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 5-9; Bernard, I, pp. xvii-xix, 171; and Sloyan, 61-62. Against this, cf. Brown, I, pp. 235-36; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 340; and Barrett, p. 272. While this seems to resolve the geographical problems (see 6.1), it ignores the narrative style of the Gospel, which is not bound by geographical or even chronological sequence. In the opening chapters of the Gospel, Jesus shows remarkable geographical agility (see 1.28, 1.43, 2.1, 2.13, 3.22, 4.3, 4.43). Furthermore, in regard to chronological sequence, chs. 7 and 8—which are bound by an *inclusio* (7.1, 8.59)—contain references to 4.1-42 (7.37-39) and Jn 9 (8.12; see also the reference to Jn 9 at 10.21, 11.37).

3. Bultmann (pp. 234-37) argues that these verses are the work of a later 'ecclesiastical redaction'. Similarly Haenchen (I, pp. 296-300) argues that there is 'no internal space for such a doctrine of the eucharist in the Gospel of John, any more than there is space for a futuristic eschatology, and never alongside his "authentic" doctrine' (p. 299). This view has support in some circles: e.g. U.C. von Wahlde, '*Wiederaufnahme* as a Marker of Redaction in Jn 6,51-58' *Bib* 64 (1983), pp. 542-49. Against this, cf. Schnackenburg, II, pp. 56-59; Barrett, pp. 283-84; Lindars, p. 236; and Beasley-Murray, pp. 87, 94-95, 98; also Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 71-77. According to J.M. Perry, 'The Evolution of the Johannine Eucharist', *NTS* 39 (1993), pp. 22-35, John 6 developed in three stages, with vv. 51b-58 being added at the third stage by the evangelist soon after the community's exclusion from the synagogue, when they adopted 'a passion-oriented eucharistic practice' (p. 29).

contradict Jesus' words in v. 63 concerning the ineffectiveness of the flesh?[1] To what extent is John 6 concerned with the theme of revelation and to what extent is it eucharistic?[2] What connection do vv. 16-21 have within its context and what is its theological significance? In addition to these questions, there are also problems, from a literary critical perspective, with the generally accepted division of John 6 into 'narrative' and 'discourse'. Apart from anything else, the division leads to a devaluing of the narrative in favour of discourse (much of which is dialogue anyway), which results in 'a gross separation of vv. 1-26...from vv. 27-59'.[3] For example, in discussions of vv. 31-58, there is little reference back to the feeding (vv. 1-15) or forward to the last scene (vv. 60-71).[4]

In spite of the difficulties, it is arguable that John 6 forms an 'integrated whole'[5] that derives from its narrative structure.[6] The unity embraces the controversial vv. 51/52-58, which, in my view, are integral to the narrative. Any proposed structure, therefore, ought not to confine itself only to the so-called discourse but needs to arise from a sense of the narrative as a whole. This includes the two main character groups within the story, both of whom have a variety of appellations throughout the narrative. First, there are Jesus' disciples, named at the beginning as οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (vv. 3, 8, 12, 16, 22) and later as οἱ δώδεκα (v. 67). Secondly, there is the Galilaean crowd, variously described as ὄχλος (vv. 2, 5, 22, 24), οἱ ἄνθρωποι

1. For a discussion of the passage which includes a survey of different views, see J.D.G. Dunn, 'John VI—A Eucharistic Discourse?', *NTS* 19 (1971), pp. 328-38. Dunn supports arguments for the unity of the discourse.

2. For a history of the interpretation of vv. 51-58 from the early Fathers onward, see Schnackenburg, II, pp. 65-67.

3. Phillips, '"This is a Hard Saying"', p. 25.

4. See Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 333, who points out that John 6 is 'provided with a continuous narrative framework'; see also Brown, I, pp. 276-77. Schnackenburg (II, pp. 10, 24) speaks of the 'sign' and the discourse as inseparable.

5. J.D. Crossan, '"It is Written": A Structuralist Analysis of John 6' *Semeia* 26 (1983), p. 4.

6. J. Painter ('Tradition and Interpretation in John 6', *NTS* 35 [1989], pp. 421-50) sees John 6 as a unity exemplifying two composite literary forms: a 'quest story', in the Gospel's first edition (vv. 1-36) overlaid by a 'rejection story' (vv. 36-71). See also 'Quest and Rejection Stories in John', *JSNT* 36 (1989), pp. 17-46, esp. pp. 28-30, 35-36.

(v. 14), and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (vv. 41, 52). In the final scene they—or at least some among them—are named οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (vv. 60, 61, 66) and distinguished from the Twelve.[1] Though it is awkward at points, the change in terminology reflects, for the most part, their changing status within the narrative.[2] They too reflect the narrator's efforts to hold together a long and difficult story, which, though rambling at points and somewhat less succinct than other narratives, is nevertheless a unified whole.[3]

1. Although the terminology is confusing concerning the identity of οἱ μαθηταί, it is probable that in the earlier parts of the narrative the term refers mainly to the Twelve (named are Philip, v. 7, Andrew, v. 8, and Simon Peter, vv. 8, 68), whereas in the final scene (vv. 60-66) it refers to a wider group, including in some sense the crowd. See below, pp. 154-55.

2. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 212-17) fails to see John 6 as a unity and analyses it as two distinct conversations (vv. 1-15, 22-71).

3. To argue for the narrative unity of John 6 is not to deny the complex prehistory behind it. We can speculate that we are working with three basic levels of redaction in Jn 6. First, there is the level of short narratives. This consists of the feeding story, which at some stage in the pre-Synoptic tradition was linked to a boat incident on the Sea of Galilee (see Mk 6.35-52/Mt. 14.13-33 and Mk 8.1-21/Mt. 15.32-16.12). Verses 66-71 may also have originated as a short narrative, based around the theme of rejection and containing a remnant theology (also a feature of the Q tradition). The second level is that of the Johannine community which takes the feeding story and expands it with explanatory dialogue, and in the process begins to clarify its own distinctive christology. At some point, probably later rather than earlier, the eucharistic overtones of the feeding are made explicit by the addition of vv. 51-58 (not necessarily identical to their present form), based on the eucharistic practice of the community. The final stage is that of the evangelist. Out of the series of expansions added to the feeding story, John forges a narrative of initial acceptance which later turns into rejection, developing also the symbolism and weaving it into the unfolding of the narrative. The whole is given narrative shape with its own plot and dramatic ending. The final form, though it shows evidence of an untidy prehistory, bears witness to the theological and literary achievement of the evangelist. If this theory is plausible, it suggests that the main features of symbolic narrative are substantially the creative work of the evangelist, who builds on the work of the past and works within the constraints of the tradition which precedes him. See Brown, I, pp. 285-94, P. Borgen, 'The Unity of the Discourse in John 6', in *Logos Was the True Light and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* ('Relieff', 9; Trondheim, Norway: Tapir Publishers, University of Trondheim, 1983), pp. 21-22, and 'Observations on the Midrashic Character of John 6', in *Logos*, pp. 23-31; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 30-32, 56-59; see also S. Temple, 'A Key to the Composition of the Fourth Gospel', *JBL* 80 (1961), pp. 220-32.

Seen in these terms, the narrative of John 6 consists of four scenes. Whereas scene 2 (vv. 16-21) is concerned only with the small group of Jesus' disciples, and scene 3 (vv. 22-59) only with the crowd/'Jews', scenes 1 and 4 (vv. 1-15, 60-71) involve both groups. There is thus a parallel between the opening and closing scenes. The first raises the issue of faith and the last resolves it in diametrically opposed terms (unbelief/faith). Verses 51-59 are integral to scene 3, which consists of an extended conversation between Jesus and the crowd/'Jews' (vv. 22-59). Although the third scene contains discourse elements, it is mainly in the form of dialogue and plays an important role in advancing the narrative. The first two scenes have a similar pattern: faith is tested, Jesus reveals his identity, the group responds. The pattern is followed to a large extent in scene 3, except that the final response is left to the last scene, where it is the dominant mode:

Scene 1: *Jesus Feeds a Large Crowd with Bread and Fish (6.1-15)*
Setting of scene, vv. 1-4
Faith of disciples is tested by Jesus, vv. 5-10
Revelation: Jesus reveals himself as miraculous giver of bread, vv. 11-13
Response of people to Jesus, vv. 14-15

Scene 2: *Jesus Walks on Water and Meets Disciples in the Boat (6.16-21)*
Setting of scene, vv. 16-17a
Faith of disciples is tested, vv. 17b-19
Revelation: Jesus reveals his identity, v. 20
Response of disciples to Jesus, v. 21

Scene 3: *Jesus' Dialogue with Crowd on the Bread of Life (6.22-59)*
Setting of scene vv. 22-25
Faith of crowd is tested vv. 26-31
Revelation: Jesus reveals himself as bread of heaven vv. 32-40
Initial response of crowd vv. 41-42
Revelation: Jesus reveals himself as living bread who gives life through his death vv. 43-51
Response of crowd v. 52
Revelation: Jesus reveals necessity of feeding on him vv. 53-58
Description of scene v. 59

Scene 4: *Final Response to Jesus as the Bread of Life (6.60-71)*
Final faith response of disciples: rejection
(a) Response of disciples, v. 60 (v. 66)
(b) Revelation: Jesus clarifies σάρξ, vv. 61-63
(a) Jesus' knowledge of disciples, vv. 64-65/66
Final faith response of Twelve: confession
(a) Faith response of Twelve, vv. 67-69

(b) Revelation: Jesus reveals divine election and his impending betrayal, v. 70

(a) Jesus' knowledge of Judas as betrayer, v. 71

This proposed structure may be seen in outline as follows.

Scene 1: Jesus Feeds a Large Crowd with Bread and Fish (6.1-15)

(a) The scene is set in vv. 1-4 by the coming of the crowd, attracted to Jesus because of τὰ σημεῖα ἃ ἐποίει ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσθενούντων (v. 2; see 2.23-25), and by the reference to Passover (v. 4).

(b) Jesus, with miraculous foreknowledge, tests Philip by asking where sufficient food is to be found to feed the crowd (vv. 5-6). Philip declares the task impossible (v. 7).

(c) Andrew emphasises the point by declaring that the only food available is that brought by a small child: barley loaves (eaten only by the poor) and small, dried fish (v. 9).[1] Jesus miraculously feeds the crowd and asks the disciples to gather the scraps (vv. 10-12).[2]

(d) The meagreness of the child's food stands in contrast to the abundance of Jesus' miraculous food (v. 13).[3] The baskets of scraps gathered far outweigh the original quantities.[4] The fish, though part of the feeding, are not mentioned in the narrative that follows (see v. 23).

(e) The crowd responds by declaring Jesus to be ὁ προφήτης (v. 14) and attempting to crown him king (v. 15a). Jesus escapes them and retreats (v. 15b).

1. B. Gärtner (*John 6 and the Jewish Passover* [Lund: Gleerup, 1959], pp. 20-21) suggests an allusion in the barley loaves to Ruth 2.14 which in later Judaism take on messianic associations.

2. Brown (I, pp. 246-49) argues for eucharistic overtones here; also Schnackenburg, II, pp. 161-62, and Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, p. 236. Against this, cf. Dunn, 'John VI', pp. 332-33. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 333) is most helpful in seeing the Passover reference as 'a hint of the eucharistic significance that the narrative will reveal. It is premature to speak of the feeding as eucharistic at this stage: the significance of the "sign" is not drawn out till the third scene.'

3. Gärtner (*John 6*, p. 20) notes the contrast with the manna 'which never stretched to more than was required, and the remains of which decayed'.

4. See Meeks, *Prophet-King*, pp. 93-94, who also regards the reference to twelve baskets (p. 96) as relating to the Twelve (vv. 67-71); see Gnilka, p. 47.

Scene 2: Jesus Walks on the Water and Meets the Disciples (6.16-21)[1]
(a) Although scene 2 sits awkwardly in its narrative context,[2] it has an important narrative role in moving Jesus to the other side of the lake. There the crowd is obliged to seek him (ζήτουντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν, v. 24; ζήτειτέ με, v. 26). This provides the impetus for scene 3. Scene 2 is also important for its revelation of Jesus' identity to the disciples.

(b) The disciples set out in the boat for Capernaum. It is dark and a storm arises (vv. 16-18). Jesus' sudden appearance on the water tests their faith. It has an epiphanic character,[3] evidenced in the revelatory utterance ἐγώ εἰμι (v. 20).[4] The disciples respond with fear (v. 19b) and Jesus reassures them. The boat comes safely to land (v. 21).

Scene 3: Dialogue with the Crowd on the Bread of Life (6.22-59)
(a) The first part sets the scene for the dialogue (vv. 22-25). The crowd takes great pains to seek Jesus and discover more of what he has to offer.

(b) The faith of the crowd is tested as Jesus challenges them to a new understanding of their action in seeking him (vv. 26-31).

(c) Verse 31 introduces the idea of the manna, linked to the Passover typology (see v. 4).[5] This is important for the dialogue that

1. Traditionally, this has been called a 'sign' which would bring the number of Johannine 'signs' to seven. It is not at all clear from the narrative that the text intends it to be taken as a 'sign'. Apart from anything else, the miraculous element is obscure; see Bernard, I, p. 185, and Sanders and Mastin, p. 183.

2. Gärtner (*John 6*, pp. 15-17) shows that Judaism linked the events of Passover with the 'other great divine signs' in the desert (p. 15), particularly the crossing of the Reed Sea and the giving of the manna (see v. 31). See Beasley-Murray, pp. 88-89, who identifies a strong Exodus typology through the narrative; also Carson, pp. 268-67. Against this, cf. Schnackenburg, II, p. 30.

3. According to J.P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea: Meaning and Gospel Functions of Matthew 14.22-33, Mark 6.45-52 and John 6.15b-21* (AnBib, 87; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1981), pp. 76-83, the story is essentially a 'sea-rescue story', and contains three theological elements which cohere with the rest of Jn 6 (pp. 173-74): christology (Jesus is the life-giver), soteriology (Jesus rescues his disciples) and ecclesiology (the Twelve become possessors of eternal life).

4. See Schnackenburg, II, pp. 10, 27-29, and Bultmann, pp. 215-16; against this, cf. Barrett, p. 281, who argues that ἐγώ εἰμι here is a 'simple self-identification'.

5. According to Borgen ('Unity', in *Logos*, pp. 21-22, and 'Observations on the Midrashic Character of John 6', in *Logos*, pp. 23-24) v. 31 provides the key

follows and particularly the comparison between Moses/manna and Jesus/living bread.[1] In Judaism the idea of the manna was associated with the Torah, which is a secondary theme in the narrative.[2]

(d) The quotation in v. 31 is from the Old Testament, but occurs nowhere in quite this form. The possibilities are: Exod. 16.15, Ps. 78.24, Neh. 9.15, Ps. 105.48 and Wis. 16.20, the most likely being a combination of the first two.[3]

(e) Jesus' self-revelation in the ἐγώ εἰμι saying of v. 35 is the narrative and theological centre of the scene, and indeed of the entire

OT text for the unity of the rest of the discourse (vv. 31-58), based on midrashic patterns of exegesis. In his view, vv. 32-48 draw out the meaning of the first part of the quotation (ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς), while vv. 49-58 are midrashic expansion of the last word φαγεῖν. See also B.J. Malina, *The Palestinian Manna Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), pp. 105-106, and P. Borgen, 'Aspects of Debate on Expository Method and Form', in *Logos*, pp. 32-46. The problem with Borgen's view is that it does not set v. 31 within a broader narrative context.

1. Borgen ('Observations', in *Logos*, pp. 24-28) suggests a pattern of negation and clarification in vv. 33-34, found in Palestinian midrash and Philo: οὐ... ἀλλ'... (see the Hebrew formula: אל תקריאלא).

2. On the link between manna and Torah, see Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 336; Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 255-56; and P. Borgen, 'The Unique Vision of God in Jesus, the Son of Joseph. John 6,31-58', in *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* ('Relieff', 9; Trondheim, Norway: Tapir Publishers, University of Trondheim, 1965), pp. 147-57. See also Barrett, pp. 288-89, and Gärtner, *John 6*, pp. 17-18. E.D. Freed (*Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John* [Leiden: Brill, 1965], pp. 13-14) points to the correspondence between the Messiah and Moses, the first deliverer, in rabbinic thought, hence the necessity of the manna. Thus manna becomes a symbol of the new age; see Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 335-36; Haenchen, I, p. 291; and Brown, I, pp. 262, 265-66.

3. So Schnackenburg, II, pp. 40-31; also Haenchen, I, pp. 290-91; Lindars, pp. 256-57; Brown, I, p. 26; and Barrett, p. 289. Freed (*OT Quotations*, p. 15) comments that the best explanation is 'that Jn had in mind Ex 16:4, 15 and Ps 78:24 and probably was familiar with both the Heb. and Gr. texts'. Either he was quoting from memory or 'invented' the quotation for his own theological purposes. To the list of candidates he adds Deut. 8.3, 16, Num. 11.6-9, Josh. 5.12, Prov. 9.5 and 2 Bar. 29.8 (p. 12). He also shows that a number of significant Johannine terms are present in Neh. 9.20 (LXX). See M.J. Menken, 'The Provenance and Meaning of the Old Testament Quotations in John 6:31', *NovT* 30 (1988), pp. 44-46, who regards the main influence as Ps. 78.24, with the evangelist adding the words ἐκ τοῦ to οὐρανοῦ in order to stress his theological concern with Jesus' origins.

narrative. It arises out of the preceding verses, and the rest of scene 3 elucidates it (see vv. 48, 51).[1]

(f) The dialogue continues throughout the following verses, shaped by a distinctive narrative movement. Jesus expands the meaning of v. 35 (vv. 36-40, 43-51, 53-58) and the response of the crowd 'Jews' begins to change, as they become increasingly alienated from the revelation (vv. 41-42, 52).

(g) The closing verses of the discourse are eucharistic (vv. 53-58),[2] belonging also in their narrative context where they continue the development of Jesus' self-revelation.

Scene 4: Final Response: Rejection/Faith (6.60-71)

(a) The main purpose of scene 4 is to show people's faith response to the revelation.[3]

(b) Many now begin to turn away (vv. 60-66) 'scandalised' by Jesus' revelation. This refers to the dialogue of scene 3 which consists of one theme—ὁ λόγος (v. 60)—gradually unfolded.[4]

(c) Jesus reveals more fully the meaning of σάρξ in the unusual construction of v. 62,[5] referring to himself in the role of Son of Man.

(d) The departure of many in v. 66 confirms Jesus' supernatural knowledge of the disciples' rejection (vv. 64-65).

1. In Jn 6 Jesus is identified with the bread of life, unlike John 4.1-42 where he is the giver but not the content of the gift. This is because in 4.1-42, the gift is more closely linked with πνεῦμα than is the case in John 6 (although the theme of πνεῦμα is not absent; see v. 63); see above, ch. 3, pp. 76-77.

2. E.g. see Brown, I, pp. 285-91; Schnackenburg, II, p. 56; Barrett, pp. 297-99; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 338; and Hoskyns, pp. 298-299; against this, cf. Dunn, 'John VI', p. 335; Carson, pp. 276-80; and M.J.J. Menken, 'John 6,51c-58: Eucharist or Christology?', *Bib* 74 (1993), pp. 1-26. Eucharistic allusions are present in the reference to 'drinking the blood' (v. 53-56), in the formal, liturgical quality of the language and the echo of the words of institution from the Synoptics (Mk 14.22-25/pars.) and Paul (1 Cor. 11.23-26). See J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1966), pp. 198-201. See the discussion below, pp. 152-53.

3. Bultmann (pp. 443-51) transposes these verses to follow 8.30-40. He points out (in that context) that they represent the moment of κρίσις.

4. Cf. Brown, I, p. 299, however, who sees this as referring to vv. 35-50 rather than vv. 51-58.

5. On the conditional clause and its missing apodosis, see Brown, I, p. 296; Schnackenburg, II, p. 71; also BDF §482. See below, p. 153.

(e) In the final part of the scene (vv. 67-71),[1] Simon Peter confesses his faith on behalf of the Twelve (vv. 68-69). Jesus affirms Peter's confession (v. 70) and reveals knowledge of his betrayer (vv. 70b-71). It is the first reference to Judas Iscariot in the Gospel.

B. *John 6 as Symbolic Narrative*

The purpose of this study is to show how John 6 operates as symbolic narrative. As we have already observed, the structure of John 6 is best understood as a full narrative rather than in categories of 'sign' and discourse. The narrative gives birth to the central symbolism as the movement is made from a materialistic to a symbolic understanding. The basic symbol is that of eating the bread of life/heaven. Once again we see how image and 'sign' reveal the characteristic pattern of metaphor and symbol, through the five Stages of the narrative.

Scene 1: Feeding—Stages 1 to 3 (vv. 1-15)

The importance of scene 1 lies in the establishing of the central 'sign' and image in the context of a Jewish feast, which represents Stage 1 of the narrative. That these will take on Johannine symbolic value is not yet apparent. Three aspects of the feeding, however, are crucial for the narrative that follows: first, Jesus himself feeds the crowd rather than his disciples (v. 11; cf. Mark 6.41/ pars., 8.6/par.); secondly, the food (bread) is given in extravagant abundance (v. 13); thirdly, in eating the miraculous food, the people are fully satisfied (v. 12a; see vv. 53-58). These details are an essential part of the establishing of the foundational 'sign' and image, the significance of which will be drawn out in the following two scenes. At the same time, the narrator sets the whole in the context of Passover (v. 4), also linked to the key symbolism of the narrative.

The narrative is centred around the issue of faith. The two groups introduced in vv. 2-3 (the large crowd which follows Jesus on account of his σημεῖα, and the disciples) make their appearance in close relation to Jesus. The language which describes them is the language of faith and discipleship. The crowd follows Jesus (ἀκολοθέω, a technical term in the Gospels) in response to his 'signs'; the disciples are

1. Some identify this as a parallel with Caeserea Philippi in the Synoptics (Mk 8.27-31/pars.); e.g. Brown, I, p. 301, and Barrett, p. 306. A closer parallel, however, is Martha's confession at 11.27. See below, Chapter 7, pp. 204-206.

already grouped with Jesus (μετά, v. 3). The physical posture of each group in relation to Jesus reinforces the point: the disciples are seated with him, awaiting the arrival of the crowd, while the crowd is moving towards Jesus (vv. 2-3). These clues indicate to the careful reader that the narrative is primarily concerned with faith.[1]

Stage 2 begins with the testing of the disciples' faith (v. 6a). Jesus takes the initiative, as in previous narratives,[2] by presenting Philip with the problem of food to feed the approaching crowd. Once again we find Jesus engaged in mission, setting out to do the work of God by offering eternal life (see 5.21, 26). In spite of the disciples' experience at 4.31-42,[3] however, Philip does not comprehend the significance of Jesus' challenge: διακοσίων δηναρίων ἄρτοι οὐκ ἀρκοῦσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἕκαστος βραχύ [τι] λάβῃ (v. 7). He fails to understand the crowd's pursuit of Jesus (ἀκολούθει...αὐτῷ ὄχλος πολύς, v. 2; πολὺς ὄχλος ἔρχεται πρὸς αὐτόν, v. 5) and Jesus' concern to feed them in symbolic terms. The hunger of which Jesus speaks in v. 5b refers to a deeper level of reality than the material. Similarly the interrogative πόθεν can be answered only in the symbolic terms of ὁ καταβαίνων. This, however, will only be disclosed later in the narrative.

Andrew's response (vv. 8-9), like Philip's (v. 7), is an example of a misunderstanding. He too is thinking on a materialistic level. Jesus' challenge, therefore, finds the faith of οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ (as represented in Philip and Andrew) inadequate when tested. As at 4.31-34, they do not perceive the metaphorical and symbolic significance of food: 'Their response is off the mark because they have not discerned what is true but does not appear so about Jesus: namely that Jesus' words are food (6.63) and that what appears to be food is not'.[4] At the

1. On this basis, L.Th. Witkamp ('Some Specific Johannine Features in John 6.1-21' *JSNT* 40 [1990], pp. 47-51) argues that vv. 1-15 are to be read as Johannine catechesis.

2. See Jesus' initiative in previous symbolic narratives: his introducing of the image of birth at 3.3, his request for a drink from the Samaritan woman at 4.7, and his challenging question to the sick man at the Pool at 5.6.

3. See the overtones of Jesus' conversation with the disciples at 4.31-38, esp. in the verbs ἐπαίρω and θεάομαι (4.35 and 6.5). The disciples in John 6 are unable to raise their eyes and perceive, in the crowd, the fields ripe for harvest. This allusion gives a missionary focus to John 6. Both are concerned with food as a symbol of life, though in different ways.

4. Phillips, '"This is a Hard Saying"', p. 48.

end of the narrative, the faith of these disciples is again tested (μὴ καὶ ὑμεῖς θέλετε ὑπάγειν, v. 67) and a different response evoked in the response of Simon Peter (vv. 68-69).

While Stage 2 encompasses the misunderstanding of the disciples, Stage 3 begins with the crowd's response to the feeding. Here we see the beginnings of an understanding as the people struggle to comprehend its significance. The struggle focuses initially on the identity of Jesus, where the crowd shows a rudimentary christological understanding (vv. 14-15). Jesus is affirmed as ἀληθῶς ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον (v. 14), a title which is similar to that used by the Samaritan woman as her faith matures (4.19). Both misunderstanding and understanding are present here. The title 'prophet' does not represent a full Johannine understanding, but is partial; much more is required for the crowd to reach understanding. However, the notion of ὁ προφητης implies a reference to Moses identified in Judaism with the eschatological prophet (see Deut. 18.15, 18-19). To see Jesus merely as a second Moses is a misunderstanding, but nevertheless opens the way for a deeper perspective. Already we know the importance of Moses' role in pointing symbolically to Jesus (John 5.45-47).

The same juxtaposition of understanding and misunderstanding characteristic of Stage 3 is present in v. 15. The desire of the crowd to make Jesus king involves insight as well as obvious misunderstanding. The Fourth Gospel, in a number of places, portrays Jesus in kingly terms (see especially 18.33-37; 19.2-5, 14-15, 19-22). In particular, the Good Shepherd discourse (10.1-18) provides an important parallel to v. 15. There Jesus is the Shepherd-King who gives life to the sheep by providing them with food and shelter (εἰσελεύσεται καὶ ἐξελεύσεται καὶ νομὴν εὑρήσει...ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν, 10.9-10; see also κἀγὼ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, 10.28). Behind this passage is the notion of the monarch's responsibility for feeding the people (including in the Ancient Near East the fertility of the land; see Pss. 72.6, 16; 144.13). In terms of this background, Jesus' feeding of the people is rightly interpreted as a kingly act.

More obvious, however, is the misunderstanding. While recognising Jesus as king, the crowd fails to perceive that it is a kingship οὐκ...ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου (see 18.36). It is not a monarchy in the normal way of things. Indeed, at a number of points, it is radically different

from the world's understanding and experience of monarchical rule. It is not concerned with physical sustenance in itself. Furthermore the verb ἁρπάζω suggests a decision made by force which completely bypasses the wishes and self-understanding of Jesus.[1] The kingship of Jesus is of a different quality from that of the world: it does not require forceful human intervention, nor indeed violence of any kind, to establish it (see 18.36b). Thus while the crowd struggles to name Jesus and acclaim him, the understanding they evince at this stage is a materialistic one.[2] The inadequacy of their understanding is confirmed by Jesus' withdrawal (v. 15b).

Scene 2: On the Water—Stage 3 cont. (vv. 16-21)

The awkward positioning of scene 2 makes it difficult, but not impossible, to detect its literary and theological function within the narrative. Partly its importance lies in the use of Passover motifs in relation to Jesus (see v. 4). This Passover imagery lies dormant in scene 1 and is unveiled in scene 2 as part of the symbolism of the narrative. Jesus' walking on the water (v. 19) and the menace of the sea (v. 18) recall the major events of the Exodus, which are synonymous with salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures. In particular, Jesus' control over the sea and the journey of the disciples in the boat parallel the divine control over the Reed Sea which liberated the children of Israel from oppression and slavery (Exod. 14). The Passover allusions also point forward to the discussion of the manna in scene 3 (see v. 31) where the imagery is further enlarged.

As part of the symbolic narrative, the scene also relates to the faith of the disciples. Jesus' epiphany on the water (v. 19), his words of revelation and reassurance (ἐγώ εἰμι, μὴ φοβεῖσθε, v. 20) and the safe landing of the boat (v. 21), are all directed towards developing the faith and understanding of the disciples. Just as the crowd in the first scene begins to understand something of Jesus' identity (vv. 14-15), so now Jesus offers his disciples insight into his identity and

1. So Calvin, pp. 148-49.

2. According to W.A. Meeks, 'Moses as God and King', in J. Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), pp. 354-371, and *Prophet-King*, pp. 176-257, there is an allusion to Moses in v. 15; in Jewish tradition ('Moses', p. 371) he was seen 'both as revealer (prophet) and as vice-regent (king)'. This is also a misunderstanding (Meeks, *Prophet-King*, pp. 318-19). See Menken, 'OT Quotation', pp. 49-50, 52-53.

mission. This too is part of the process of Stage 3. The disciples' initial response—καὶ ἐφοβηθησαν (v. 19b)—shows a characteristic lack of understanding. They fail to see in the one who crosses the water the life-giving and saving presence of God. With the disclosure of his identity in v. 20, however, they are at once anxious to welcome him into the boat (v. 21a). This suggests a deepening level of understanding as their fear is overcome. Nevertheless, for the time being, their story is held over while the focus moves to the unruly crowd which now begins urgently to seek Jesus.

Scene 3: Dialogue with Crowd/'Jews'—Stage 3 (vv. 22-59)

The third scene of the narrative represents the further development of Stage 3, already begun in vv. 14-15 and continued in the epiphany scene of vv. 16-20. The inordinate length of scene 3 is due to the change of direction in the response of the crowd. While at first they respond positively and are genuinely receptive to the revelation, the direction changes and they begin to react in an increasingly hostile fashion. Nevertheless, through both positive and negative responses, the symbolism of the central image and 'sign' emerges, as Jesus gradually unfolds the meaning in a series of clarifying statements.[1] This happens within the context of dialogue.

The crowd's desire to seek Jesus in vv. 22-25 is a sign of understanding on their part, since 'seeking' is used elsewhere in the Gospel of embryonic discipleship (see 1.38 and Jesus' question: τί ζητεῖτε;). Yet when they reach Capernaum, their initial question to Jesus is an inept one: πότε ὧδε γέγονας; (v. 25). They barely know what it is they want or why they want it so urgently. In the dialogue that follows, Jesus attempts to reveal the true significance of their need, just as he has done with the Samaritan woman (4.10, 13-14, 17b-18). In v. 26 Jesus responds not to their question, but rather to their seeking of him, challenging them to a deeper understanding. From this point on, as the crowd struggles to understand, we as readers come to see more and more clearly the basic issue which is at stake in the narrative. It is a case of two diametrically opposed interpretations of the feeding: a materialistic and a symbolic one.

In v. 26 βρῶσις is used synonymously with ἄρτος, although it is the image of 'work' which dominates, arising out of the crowd's

1. See Talbert, p. 134, who sees the point of the dialogue at vv. 25-59 as clarifying the misunderstanding of the 'sign'.

efforts in pursuing Jesus (ἐργάζεσθε...τὴν βρῶσιν). One may labour, says Jesus, for two types of food: τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν ἀπολλυμένην (perishable food which sustains physical life) or τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον (imperishable food which gives and sustains eternal life). The two different interpretations of 'work' and 'food' parallel the two levels of meaning which are inherent in metaphor: the literal meaning, which is absurd, and the second level meaning, which emerges with the breakdown of the literal. In uttering the metaphor of v. 27, ἐργάζεσθε μὴ τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν ἀπολλυμένην ἀλλὰ τὴν βρῶσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, it is inconceivable that Jesus is forbidding people to work for a living. It would mean that they ought not to eat (see 4.31-34). Perceiving the absurdity of a literal understanding, the people then struggle to find a second level (metaphorical) meaning. Here Jesus is testing the genuineness of their quest for him.

The crowd's response in v. 28 suggests that they are moving closer to the symbolic reality to which the feeding points. Their question, like the Samaritan woman's comment at 4.20, is a theological one, indicating that their understanding has developed in a positive way. At the same time, the question still reveals misunderstanding, as Jesus' answer in v. 29 indicates. While they speak of doing the works of God (τὰ ἔργα), Jesus is speaking of the one work (τὸ ἔργον) of believing in him as the one sent by the Father.[1] Here again Jesus clarifies the metaphor of v. 27 and assists the crowd in understanding the metaphorical significance of τὸ ἔργον τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 29).

The response of the crowd in v. 30 is unexpected, though in its own terms comprehensible. At one level their request for a 'sign' is absurd, given the 'sign' of the feeding which they have just witnessed. The narrator exposes the inadequate nature of the crowd's understanding: for them, the feeding is no more than a simple miracle, not a true Johannine 'sign'.[2] In other words, they have still a long way to go in order to recognise the symbolism at the heart of the feeding.

1. Against this, cf. U.C. von Wahlde, 'Faith and Works in John vi 28-29: Exegesis or Eisegesis?', *NovT* 22 (1980), pp. 304-15, who argues that there is no significance in the change from plural to singular.

2. U.C. von Wahlde ('Literary Structure and Theological Argument in Three Discourses with the Jews in the Fourth Gospel', *JBL* 103 [1984], pp. 577-78) regards v. 30 as a literary device to illustrate the blindness of the 'Jews' (see also 8.25 and 10.24).

Nevertheless, by seizing on the word ἐργάζομαι and demanding that Jesus perform a 'work' which will enable them to believe, they are asking for 'tokens of his legitimacy'.[1] In their concern with Jesus' identity, which in one sense is rightly focused, they indicate an openness to the widening possibilities of faith.

The next verse is an important one for the narrative that follows (v. 31). The Old Testament quotation (ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν) brings to the fore the Passover and Exodus typology of vv. 4 and 16-21, and represents a maturing of the people's understanding. In their struggle to understand, they appeal quite properly to their own religious traditions. They set the feeding and the bread within the interpretative framework of the manna in the desert and see Jesus in relation to Moses as the giver of miraculous bread. As the Samaritan woman draws on the ancestral figure of Jacob, giver of abundant water (4.12), so here the crowd introduces the figure of Moses, giver of daily manna in the desert (see also vv. 14-15). With this leap in understanding on their part, we sense as readers that we are nearing the climax of the narrative. We have the expectation that, when Jesus discloses the full truth, all obstacles to understanding will be overcome.

Jesus Reveals Himself as Bread from Heaven. Despite the expectation, misunderstanding still remains in the people's perception of the feeding.[2] Indeed the disappointing direction that the dialogue is about to take is already signalled in v. 31 where the crowd identify themselves with their desert ancestors (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν). This identification will be ironically reinforced later in the narrative (vv. 49, 58). Borgen has argued here that vv. 32-33 clarify the misunderstanding of v. 31 in three ways. First, God is the giver of heavenly bread and not Moses (οὐ Μωϋσῆς...ἀλλ' ὁ πατήρ μου, v. 32). Secondly, the giving is an action of the present rather than the past

1. Odeberg (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 256) comments that the 'sign' which the crowd has in mind is a token of authority belonging to the last saviour, just as the manna was of the first saviour, Moses.

2. For Phillips ('"This is a Hard Saying"', p. 41) the essential irony lies in the fact that 'the crowd does not realize it but by the time the discursive exchange is complete Jesus will have given them bread precisely *in and through his interpretation of the Scripture*'. In Phillips' view, this is the very 'sign' which the crowd seeks and yet fails to find.

(δίδωσιν, v. 32 as against the aorist ἔδωκεν, v. 31). Thirdly, the recipients are defined broadly as τῷ κόσμῳ (v. 33) rather than the narrower focus of οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν.[1] Borgen's analysis is helpful, but also tends to obscure the main issue of these verses. Jesus' point in vv. 32-33 is that τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ is not to be identified in literal way with τὸ μάννα. Jesus' main point is *not* that God, as against Moses, was the true giver of the manna, but that the manna is not the true 'bread from heaven' (τὸν ἀληθινόν, v. 32) at all. Bread from heaven is a present reality not an event in the past and is revealed in Jesus through the unfolding of the narrative. What the evangelist is doing, in other words, is defining more and more closely the meaning of ὁ καταβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (v. 33). No parallel claim can be made of the manna, which, unlike the true bread, cannot give eternal life (ζωήν, v. 33). Only ὁ καταβαίνων can offer that divine, heavenly food.[2]

The phrase ὁ καταβαίνων in v. 33 is an example of Johannine ambiguity, which can be interpreted in a materialistic or symbolic way (see ἄνωθεν in John 3 and ὕδωρ ζῶν in 4.1-42). For the crowd, it refers to the manna (masculine singular participle, agreeing with the noun ἄρτος) and is thus interpreted in a materialistic way. On another level, however, as v. 35 shows, it refers to the person of Jesus, the descending Son of Man.[3] In the ambiguity of the phrase, we see the importance of christology for a true understanding of both 'sign' and image. To understand aright is to understand who Jesus is. In theological terms, what the evangelist does is to relocate ὁ καταβαίνων and ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ away from the manna to Jesus himself. The manna, like the feeding, now becomes a symbol for Jesus himself. It is not an end in itself but rather a pointer to Jesus. Apart from him and the gift of life he offers, the manna has no independent significance.

Once again the parallels with the story of the Samaritan woman are striking.[4] It is the same struggle between the material and the spiritual or symbolic. When the woman reaches the point of asking Jesus for the water he offers (4.15), she has progressed in understanding but is

1. So Borgen, 'Observations', pp. 24-25.
2. See Dodd, *Interpretation*, pp. 335-36, who points out that 'the manna, though miraculous, does not belong to that order of existence' which is characterised by πνεῦμα καὶ ἀληθεια.
3. See Barrett, pp. 290-91; against this, cf. Schnackenburg, II, p. 42.
4. So Brown, I, pp. 266-67, and Bultmann, pp. 213-33.

still caught in a materialistic outlook. Similarly in John 6, the crowd now asks Jesus for the bread from heaven (v. 34): κύριε, πάντοτε δὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον (see κύριε, δός μοι τοῦτο τὸ ὕδωρ, ἵνα μη διψῶ μηδὲ διέρχομαι ἐνάδε ἀντλεῖν, 4.15). The parallel between the two requests warns the reader that all is not as it seems. The crowd, for all the advances in understanding, still remains on a materialistic level.

While vv. 31-34 are intended to clarify the misunderstanding and reveal the true meaning of the feeding, they are also polemical. The idea of ὁ ἄρτος ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ is, in a sense, stripped of its Mosaic associations and given a radically new context in relation to Jesus.[1] It is Jesus, not the manna of Moses' providing, which is ἐκ τοῦ ουρανοῦ. This reflects an important dimension of John's symbolic narratives, that a religious interpretation is not enough. It may be co-opted either way: to reinforce a materialistic interpretation or to serve a Johannine symbolic perspective. When, for example, the Torah is interpreted in an absolute sense, that is, without christological signification, it becomes the support of a materialistic worldview. Only when interpreted christologically does it become a window to God and find its true meaning.

The crowd's request in v. 34 enables Jesus to respond with the central metaphorical utterance of the narrative. It is to this that the preceding verses have been leading. The οὐ Μωϋσῆς of v. 32 and ὁ καταβαίνων of v. 33 now resolve themselves into the one christological moment of revelation: ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς (v. 35). In presenting Jesus as not only the giver but also the gift itself, the narrative unveils the symbolic meaning of both 'sign' and image. The two parts of the verse parallel the two core elements of the narrative: the image of bread (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς) and the 'sign' of the feeding (ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ἐμέ οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ). Together they illustrate the close relationship between christology and faith, revelation and response. In both parts of the verse the metaphor is present. In literal terms, Jesus is not bread to satisfy the physical hunger of those who approach him, any more than he gives drink to quench physical thirst. The absurdity of the literal level invites the crowd to

1. So Meeks, *Prophet-King*, p. 319, who argues that Moses is stripped of his functions and becomes a witness like John the Baptist. Menken ('OT Quotation', pp. 48-53) shows that, in Jewish circles which developed a Moses piety, Moses tended to be deified and given a mediatorial role.

seek another meaning. Jesus fulfills the longing for life in a deeper sense. Those who come to him are offered the gift of ζωὴ αἰώνιος (see v. 40) which alone can satisfy spiritual need.[1] Verse 35 is thus the theological centre of the narrative.

At the same time, v. 35 is also the literary centre of the narrative: it is the turning-point of the plot. In v. 36 Jesus reveals his supernatural knowledge of the response the crowd will make in v. 41. Already he knows they will reject the invitation of v. 35b, even though, ironically, it is the maturing of their understanding which has elicited his self-disclosure in the 'I am' saying. After v. 35, the direction tragically alters and the narrative begins to move towards final rejection. In literary terms, it is the watershed of the narrative, just as it theologically encapsulates the central meaning. The two aspects epitomise once again the Johannine sense of unity between form and meaning.

Verses 37-40 are an expansion and elucidation of the invitation of v. 35b. They provide reassurance for those who come to Jesus (vv. 37-38) and emphasise that the gift offered is eternal life (vv. 39-40). As ὁ καταβαίνων (see καταβέβηκα, v. 38), Jesus comes down from heaven in order to carry out the Father's will. These verses also testify to the mystery of divine election which is an important subtheme of the narrative. Although the invitation is open to all (v. 37), those who do come are chosen by God and will receive eternal life in both present and future.[2] This acts as a commentary on the narrative, and in particular on the way in which the crowd has changed direction. The mysterious union of human and divine choice will be enacted definitively in the final scene of the narrative when many leave and only the few remain (see vv. 65, 70a).

Misunderstanding of the 'Jews'. As is made clear in v. 41, Jesus' foreknowledge is right (v. 36). The people have refused to move

1. So Bultmann, p. 222. The second part of v. 35 provides a parallel with the narrative of the Samaritan woman: at 4.14 Jesus tells her ὃς δ' ἂν πίῃ...οὐ μὴ διψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

2. See R. Kysar, 'Pursuing the Paradoxes of Johannine Thought: Conceptual Tensions in John 6: A Redaction-Critical Proposal', in D.E. Groh and R. Jewett (ed.), *The Living Text. Essays in Honor of E.W. Saunders* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 189-206, who argues that the themes of responsibility and eschatology here are illustrative of John's paradoxical theology.

beyond a materialistic level, and now begin to 'murmur' against his self-revelation. That the tide has turned and the crowd begun to reject the symbolism of the narrative, is emphasised in the use of γογγύζω. In this or cognate form, the verb is used in the giving of the manna at Exodus 16 (LXX) where it describes the rebellion of the children of Israel against God (see especially Exod. 16.2-3, 7-9, 12).[1] The 'muttering' of the crowd signifies a step backward in understanding and they are designated οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι for the first time in John 6. Their response indicates a continuity with the desert ancestors (v. 31), who also refused to believe.[2] From now on, though the dialogue continues within Stage 3, it does so in an increasingly hostile fashion. The people become more deeply alienated in their understanding, as the symbolism of the narrative unfolds. As with John 5, we see here how an increasing alienation can operate paradoxically in the narrative to disclose the symbolic meaning.

What is significant here, from a theological as well as narrative point of view, is the basis of the crowd's objection to Jesus as ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβὰς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (v. 41).[3] In v. 42 the difficulty of the 'Jews' in believing is that they know Jesus' parents; they know, in other words, his human origins. The evangelist seems to regard Jesus' conception and birth as perfectly normal. At the same time, paradoxically, he is also ὁ καταβάς.[4] The allusion to the incarnation is precisely the point at issue for οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. It is this that they cannot accept. As we have seen, the inability to perceive the symbolic significance of the basic 'sign' or image ties in closely with the inability to perceive Jesus as the symbol of God. Jesus' ordinary physical origins (οὗ ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα, v. 42) present an obstacle to the 'Jews', who cannot see how he can be also ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. For them his earthly and heavenly origins are

1. On this, see K.H. Rengstorf, 'γογγύζω', *TDNT*, I, pp. 728-37.

2. So Rengstorf, 'γογγύζω', pp. 734-35.

3. The first quotation in v. 41 of Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι statement is not strictly accurate, since Jesus at no point says exactly these words. The evangelist aims, however, to reproduce the inner meaning of the quotation and to develop it within a new narrative context. The quotation in v. 41 captures the theme of the preceding section while restating more succinctly the ἐγώ εἰμι of v. 35.

4. Haenchen (I, p. 292) argues that the virginal conception is not part of Johannine belief: '[John] assumes... that Jesus as true man had an earthly father and mother; he further assumes that this does not deny that he came from God.'

incompatible. Yet the human parentage of Jesus points symbolically to Jesus' heavenly origins, just as the bread of the feeding points symbolically to Jesus as ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβάς. This is the major obstacle for the 'Jews' and the central challenge to their faith.

The Revelation Intensifies. The language of vv. 43-46 is plainer than that of the preceding verses, but it is also more forceful and uncompromising. Although the 'Jews' are now moving increasingly towards rejection of Jesus, their objections invite further clarification. No attempt is made to argue how Jesus can be the child of human parents and also the incarnate Word. Instead, the evangelist asserts that Jesus alone has direct access to God. He alone is the divine Logos who lives in unmediated intimacy with God (v. 46). Only he communicates God's life to those who believe. The test of the genuineness of one's relationship with God, therefore, lies entirely in one's response to Jesus (vv. 44, 47). This is the point of v. 45 in which the invitation to faith is addressed to the crowd. Using similar terms to v. 35 (ὁ ἐρχόμενος/ἔρχεται πρὸς ἐμέ), the evangelist asserts that to be 'taught of God' and to be a hearer of God's word means not a literal adherence to the Torah,[1] but an acceptance of the invitation of Jesus–Sophia as the pathway to life.[2]

In vv. 47-51, Jesus returns to the core symbolism of the narrative in order to clarify it.[3] The double repetition of the ἐγώ εἰμι declaration of v. 35 in vv. 48 and 51 is once again in two parts: first, Jesus as ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς and secondly, what it means for human beings to 'feed' on Jesus (vv. 50, 51b). In these verses, the notion of feeding is set over against the manna (vv. 49-50) in more explicit language than at vv. 32-33. The bread of Jesus (in both objective and subjective senses of the genitive) is life-giving and therefore superior to the

1. Borgen ('Unique Vision', pp. 150-52) argues that vv. 41-48 have overtones of the Sinaitic revelation, as well as Sophia: 'the bread from heaven has been given the life-giving functions of Torah and wisdom. The presence of the bread is pictured with features from the theophany at Sinai and the invitation to eat and drink extended by wisdom' (p. 157).

2. Odeberg (*Fourth Gospel*, p. 258) regards the notion of being 'taught by God' as parallel to being 'born of God'. On Sophia as teacher, see Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 152-57.

3. Phillips ('"This is a Hard Saying"', p. 50) points out that the three ἐγώ εἰμι sayings become 'increasingly more specific' throughout the narrative.

manna which was powerless in the face of death.[1] Here again we find the comparison between the manna, which had no ability to give life beyond the physical and no power over death, and Jesus, who has come down ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ in the truest sense and is thus able to give eternal life.[2]

Verse 51 develops further the symbolic meaning of bread from heaven. The theme of Jesus as the giver of the bread is stressed, reminding the 'Jews' of the 'sign' in which Jesus alone gave miraculous bread to the people (v. 11; also v. 27).[3] Whereas in v. 35 Jesus has revealed himself to be the bread of life, v. 51 clarifies this by explicit reference to the flesh (σάρξ) of Jesus. That the coming of ὁ καταβαίνων refers to the incarnation has already been made clear through the dialogue. Verse 51, however, takes this further. It introduces reference to the death of Jesus, emphasised in the prepositional phrase ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς, which is stronger and more specific than the vague dative of v. 33 (τῷ κόσμῳ). This is a word-play on the verb δίδωμι: the one who *gives* himself over to flesh in the incarnation (v. 35; 1.14) is now also the one to *give* his flesh over to death.[4]

In this sense, v. 51 represents an important step forward in the elucidation of the symbolism. Again it takes place in the context of Stage 3. Jesus has spoken throughout of the life that he gives as the true bread from heaven (vv. 27, 33, 35, 39-40, 44, 47-48, 50-51). The references to eternal life are particularly prominent in vv. 47-50,

1. Verse 49 raises a problem: if the ancestors in the desert died, and if believers in the Johannine community who possess eternal life are also subject to death, in what sense are we to understand 'death' in this context? The reference to the death of the ancestors refers to the desert generation who, on account of their rebellion, were condemned to die in the desert without ever entering the Promised Land (Num. 11). With this background in mind, we need to understand 'death' in v. 49 as a reference to the judgment of God upon those who, in their murmuring, have rejected God's life-giving gift.

2. So Malina, *Manna Tradition*, p. 105; the contrast is between the manna as food of death and Jesus as bread of life.

3. Earlier in the narrative it is God who is said to be the giver of the bread (vv. 32-33). There is no inconsistency here, however, since the unity of will and purpose between Jesus and the Father is stressed throughout the narrative (vv. 37-40, 44-46).

4. Lindars (pp. 267, 268, 273) points out that passion and incarnation belong together here.

where the life that Jesus gives contrasts with the death of the desert ancestors who ate the manna. What is added in v. 51c is one of the central paradoxes of the Fourth Gospel: the life which Jesus gives comes only through his death (see 12.24, 19.34).[1] Throughout the narrative of John 6, the symbolism has pointed to Jesus as the giver of life. Now, in order to clarify the meaning of this symbolism, the narrator discloses that ζωὴ αἰςώνιος is given only at the cost of life. Life is given through death.[2]

Jesus' self-revelation in v. 51 produces a negative reaction in the 'Jews' who now begin to quarrel among themselves (ἐμάχοντο πρὸς ἀλληλους, v. 52). They are shocked by the way in which Jesus has made the link between the gift of bread and the giving of his σάρξ. Once again their objection serves an important function in the narrative. On the one hand it represents a further distancing of the people from the gift that Jesus offers. While the narrative is still within Stage 3, the hostility of the 'Jews' is escalating.[3] This is seen in their disagreement among themselves and in the misunderstanding of v. 52 which requires further elucidation: πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα [αὐτοῦ] φαγεῖν;[4] Again Jesus' opponents assume a literal interpretation of his utterance. On the other hand the question of v. 52 advances the dialogue and allows the symbolic meaning to emerge. It makes more explicit Jesus' utterance of v. 51c and relates it to the meaning of 'eating my flesh'. Although made in an increasingly hostile context, the question is addressed by Jesus in v. 53 in a serious and purposeful way.

Jesus' reply in vv. 53-58 seems calculated at first to escalate the hostility. Nevertheless, the intention is to challenge the crowd to a symbolic understanding of 'eating the flesh' of Jesus. This happens, not through explanatory paraphrase as we might expect, but rather

1. This is the central theme of the Raising of Lazarus (11.1-12.11).

2. On this see B. Lindars, 'Word and Sacrament in the Fourth Gospel', *SJT* 29 (1976), pp. 59-60. J.A. Grassi ('Eating Jesus' flesh and Drinking his Blood: The Centrality and Meaning of John 6.51-58', *BTB* 17 [1987], pp. 26-29) sees vv. 51-58 and the reference to Jesus' death as creating 'a passover atmosphere' (p. 29).

3. This is emphasised by the verb μάχομαι which is stronger than γογγύζω at v. 41.

4. Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, p. 77) points to parallels between the response of the 'Jews', in v. 52 and Nicodemus' question at 3.4. In both cases, Jesus' response is similar: an ἀμήν saying is following by ἐὰν μή (3.5, 6.53).

through an intensifying of the metaphorical language of v. 51c. What now becomes clear is that the idea of feeding on Jesus the bread of life, who gives life through his death, is an uncompromising demand for all who desire to possess life ἐν ἑαυτοῖς (v. 53). Here at the end of Stage 3 of the narrative, in which 'the Feeder becomes the Food',[1] the polemic again surfaces: Jesus, not Moses, is the one who gives life. Verse 53 underlines the demanding, yet intimate nature of the invitation to faith by the use of the title 'Son of Man' with its connotations of revelation and judgment (see 5.27).

Verse 53 forms the nucleus of the metaphor, paralleling Jesus' metaphorical utterance to Nicodemus at 3.3, 5. It makes no sense on the literal level: cannibalism is as absurd a notion as that of an adult experiencing physical birth. Jesus' words in the verses that follow facilitate a second level understanding. While v. 54 appears merely to restate v. 53 in positive terms, it also clarifies the meaning of ζωή. It is not physical life to which Jesus is referring but rather ζωὴ αἰώνιος, present as a reality now and also a future promise (ἀναστήσω αὐτόν). The unfolding of the metaphor continues in the verses that follow. The description of βρῶσις and πόσις as ἀληθής points the reader away from the literal sense of these terms to the Johannine understanding of truth (see 1.17, 8.32, 18.37). It is not literal food and drink which Jesus offers through the gift of his σάρξ, but rather *true* food and drink; nourishment, in other words, which has its origins 'from above' and communicates the divine life.

Verses 57-58 continue to expand the metaphor. Now it becomes clear that to 'eat the flesh' and 'drink the blood' is an image of the union which takes place between believers and Jesus: 'just as the believer is continually drawn upwards in the Son as comprising in himself the whole Divine reality, so the believer simultaneously may be said continually to draw the Son into himself, to absorb the Divine life'.[2] The verb μένω is used throughout the Gospel of the intimate relationship between Jesus and the believing community. This life is no less than the divine life shared between the Father and the Son (v. 57; see 15.4-7, 9-10). Thus φαγεῖν is an image of relationship with God through Jesus, in which God nourishes the life of believers and the believing community. The explication of the metaphor in these

1. Crossan, '"It is Written"', p. 14.
2. Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 259-60.

terms is a new and important dimension of the discourse as a whole.[1] At this point, the narrative has disclosed the full symbolic meaning of the feeding (vv. 1-15).

Eucharistic Overtones of vv. 53-58. Verses 53-58, as we have observed, contain strongly eucharistic language going beyond the metaphorical and reflecting the cultic life of the Johannine community. This dimension serves an important function in the narrative. For the evangelist, the reference to the eucharist shows how the symbolism operates. The sacrament is a symbol disclosing Jesus as the true bread of heaven.[2] It gives expression to the union of the believing community with God,[3] a union which communicates life through the self-giving of Jesus, particularly, in this context, through his death. Though the primary focus of the verses is christological, the sacramental meaning is consonant with John's symbolic worldview and with the development of the narrative at this point.[4] The metaphorical discourse of Jesus in

1. See Schnackenburg, II, p. 65: 'it is not the eating and drinking itself which is important, but the personal union with Jesus which it brings about. The sacramental link becomes a personal union.'

2. Although Brown, I, p. 283 (following Hoskyns, pp. 298-99), suggests that the verb τρώγω gives greater emphasis to 'the realism of the eucharistic flesh and blood', it is linguistically more probable that the participial form is being used in place of the root verb ἐσθίω; see Barrett, p. 299; Lindars, pp. 268-69; Schnackenburg, II, p. 62; and Carson, p. 296; also Menken, 'John 6,51c-58', p. 17.

3. C. Cosgrove ('The Place Where Jesus Is: Allusions to Baptism and the Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 35 [1989], p. 535) sees these verses as referring to 'the concrete fleshly existence of the community that bears the stigma and destiny of the Stranger from above'.

4. Some have argued that the entire discourse has one basic meaning: whether sapiential in relation to faith (e.g. Dunn, 'John VI', p. 333; also Phillips, '"This a Hard Saying"', pp. 23-56; Thompson, *Humanity*, pp. 44-49; Bultmann, pp. 209-37, and Haenchen, I, p. 298), or eucharistic (e.g. V. Ruland, 'Sign and Sacrament: John's Bread of Life Discourse [Chapter 6]', *Int* 18 [1964], pp. 450-62, and G.H.C. MacGregor, 'The Eucharist in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 9 [1962–63], pp. 114-16). As with πνεῦμα in 4.1-42, a good case can be made for either option. It is far more likely that the narrative is evocative of both revelation (Sophia) and the eucharist; e.g. see Brown, I, pp. 272, 290-91 (who suggests that the first part of the discourse is sapiential and the last part eucharistic [vv. 51-58]), Feuillet, 'Principles Themes', pp. 57-128, and Gärtner, *John 6*, pp. 22-23. Talbert (pp. 138-39) sees a progression in thought from christology to eucharist; thus the eucharistic language is grounded in the incarnation.

vv. 53-58 is the linguistic expression of a symbol which has its roots in the life experience of believers.[1]

Scene 4: Response—Stages 4 to 5 (vv. 60-71)

In the final scene, we reach the climax to which the narrative has been leading. Now the people who initially appeared to be on the way to discipleship choose knowingly the path of unbelief.[2] This represents Stage 4 of the narrative in which the leading characters reject the symbolic meaning (vv. 60-65). They are 'scandalised' (σκανδαλίζω, v. 61) because the feeding, unfolded through the discourse, has summoned them to a new kind of faith, a symbolic apprehension of Jesus as the source of life through his incarnation and death. Yet precisely because they cannot make the shift in consciousness from one level of perception to another, they reject Jesus and choose to cling to a materialistic understanding of his message. Here the σκληρὸς λόγος (v. 60) refers to the revelation of Jesus as the bread of life on whom people must feed in order to gain life.[3]

Jesus responds to the rejection of vv. 60-61 with a difficult saying which has given rise to a number of interpretations (v. 62). The most likely of these is that v. 62 refers to Jesus' death/exaltation when the full revelation will occur (see v. 51).[4] Once again this points to Jesus as ὁ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς (v. 58), which has been the central point of the narrative. For the evangelist, the full revelation/scandal of Jesus as ὁ καταβάς is only seen when he will reveal himself, through the cross, to be also ὁ ἀναβαίνων. Tied together in the closest possible way, therefore, is the revelation of incarnation (descent from heaven) and crucifixion/exaltation (ascent to heaven); v. 62, in line with vv. 51-58, points particularly to the latter. The σκληρὸς λόγος is the

1. See Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 77-81.

2. Bultmann, pp. 447-48; also Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 344.

3. Barrett (p. 303) points out that here σκληρός means 'unacceptable' not 'hard to understand'.

4. Bultmann (pp. 444-45) interprets the missing apodosis as intensifying the scandal, and Hoskyns, pp. 339-40, and Lightfoot, p. 169, as diminishing it. Schnackenburg (II, p. 71) rightly regards these as false alternatives; the saying is revelatory, but nevertheless, to the eyes of unbelief, it can increase the offence. See also Westcott, p. 109; Barrett, pp. 303-304; Lindars, pp. 272-73; Beasley-Murray, p. 96; and Marsh, pp. 309-10. Bernard (I, pp. 216-17) identifies only a reference to the ascension without implying the cross. Cf. Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 120-23, who argues that there is no reference here to the cross or the ascension.

reality of a divine origin and a divine destiny in the human person of Jesus. It is the full revelation of Jesus as the bread of life that is finally rejected in these verses.

Meaning of οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. In vv. 61 and 66 the narrative again changes terminology, this time referring to the central characters as οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ. It is unclear whether this refers to the crowd/ 'Jews' as a whole or simply to a group of disciples among them, including some who are among Jesus' inner group. We have already seen the crowd's early following of Jesus (vv. 24-26) as a sign of embryonic discipleship. Moreover, in v. 45 Jesus challenged the crowd precisely as disciples, those who aspire to be διδακτοὶ θεοῦ and who wish to hear and learn from the Father (ἀκούω, μανθάνω). Although after v. 35 their faith is on the wane, they have nonetheless stayed with Jesus throughout scene 3 and struggled in their own way to understand his message (Stage 3). In this context it may be noted that elsewhere in the Gospel people are called 'disciples' whose faith is partial and who finally reject Jesus (see 8.30-31a).

Given the obvious link with οἱ μαθηταὶ; αὐτοῦ in scenes 1 and 2, it is possible that the term also includes a number of the inner group. If members of both groups are in mind (the crowd and Jesus' disciples), as is likely, vv. 60-66 represents on the one hand the response of the crowd/'Jews', and on the other hand includes some among the inner group of disciples who are associated with Jesus in scenes 1 and 2. In other words, the narrator has allowed the two streams to flow together in the final section of the narrative. If this is plausible, it gives greater poignancy to vv. 66-67 where only a small minority is left. For the narrator, not only does the crowd reject Jesus, but also many of his intimate associates.[1]

Verse 66 represents Stage 5 of the narrative where πολλοὶ [ἐκ] τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ leave Jesus. The wording of the verse is emphatic in describing the departure of these disciples: ἀπῆλθον εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ οὐκέτι μετ' αὐτοῦ περιεπάτουν. While there is no actual statement of rejection here, it is implicit in the way the people surrender their discipleship and make a definitive break with Jesus. In negative

1. It is significant to note that, whereas the narrative begins with the crowd in the desert, in scene 3 it ends with them ἐν συναγωγῇ (v. 59). The geographical polarity emphasises the link with the Exodus generation, with whom the 'Jews' are identified.

terms, it is a statement of rejection in action. This takes the narrative beyond Stage 4 (vv. 60-65), where the rejection of Jesus was not yet confirmed in relation to discipleship. Here the final Stage of the narrative is reached for the crowd and for many of Jesus' disciples. Their story is finally revealed as a tragic one.

Meaning of v. 63: σάρξ *and* πνεῦμα. In this context, v. 63 poses particular problems for the narrative of John 6. It seems to contradict the way John uses the term σάρξ elsewhere, especially in relation to vv. 51c-58.[1] How is it possible to speak of the necessity of eating the flesh of the Son of Man in one place (v. 53) and a few verses later assert the opposite (v. 63)? According to some, the contradiction is a real one.[2] It takes us back to the contrast between σάρξ and πνεῦμα at 3.6, which also seems to contradict the eucharistic role of σάρξ in vv. 52-58. Indeed it could be argued that the contrast is even sharper in vv. 53 and 63, so that τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν, ἡ σάρξ οὐκ ὠφελεῖ οὐδέν stands out awkwardly against v. 53: ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου...οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς. While v. 53 asserts in uncompromising terms the necessity of σάρξ for believing existence, v. 63 seems to assert, in equally uncompromising terms, its uselessness and dispensability.

Nevertheless the juxtaposition of the two statements sets up a tensive dynamic within the narrative of John 6 which is of crucial importance for John's theology. As we discovered in 4.1-42 in relation to Jesus' thirst (4.7), σάρξ as representing a closed, materialistic worldview has no significance since it is by definition closed against the transcendent.[3] In this sense it comes closer to the way John often uses the term κόσμος (see, for example, 1.10, 15.18-19, 17.9). The contrast here is not a dualistic one of flesh against spirit, as Borgen rightly points out:

> There is no dualism between the two spheres as such, but rather a sharp distinction. Rightly understood, the external sphere of man as flesh points

1. For a helpful discussion of this, see C.K. Barrett, '"The Flesh of the Son of Man" John 6.53', in *Essays on John* (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 37-49. He shows that the three 'Son of Man' sayings cohere (vv. 27, 53, 62), thus strengthening the case for the unity of the narrative (pp. 44-49).

2. E.g. Brown, I, pp. 299-300. Against this, cf. Schnackenburg, II, pp. 71-72.

3. See above, Chapter 3, pp. 94-97.

> to the spiritual sphere... Man and his activity are ineffective in producing any life-giving affects in the spiritual sphere, just because they belong to the external sphere.[1]

What the evangelist is speaking of, then, is the contrast between σάρξ which claims for itself independence of the Creator, and σάρξ which is suffused and animated by the divine Spirit.[2] The same is true of 3.6, which, as we have seen, represents not a dualistic opposition between σάρξ and πνεῦμα, but is rather a parallel statement of the roles of flesh and spirit in relation to birth. The contrast is between flesh understood symbolically, and flesh seen only on a material level. The eucharistic flesh of v. 53 is of the former kind. It refers to the σάρξ of Jesus which, as 1.14 makes abundantly plain, is the locus of revelation for the divine δόξα.[3] Here in vv. 60-66 the scandalised disciples show that they belong to the world in its rejection of Jesus. In the decision against faith, in the refusal to move beyond a materialistic worldview, they belong to the realm of σάρξ which is unenlivened by the divine Spirit. Ironically, although they have received the bread of Jesus in the feeding (vv. 1-15), it has not brought them to a symbolic understanding.[4] They have closed themselves against the presence of the life-giving Spirit which manifests itself in σάρξ.

At the same time, v. 63 is remarkable for its articulation, in Johannine terms, of the basic dynamics of metaphor: a literal understanding (σάρξ) is useless in itself and serves only to open one's eyes to the metaphorical meaning (πνεῦμα). This represents not only the literary but also the theological dynamic of the Gospel. For John, σάρξ has the potential to be the bearer of divine πνεῦμα, a possibility which is given through the incarnation.[5] The role of σάρξ, therefore, is a paradoxical one. On the one hand it is 'useless' to bring

1. Borgen, 'Unique Vision', pp. 181-82.

2. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 342) suggests that the phrase πνεῦμα καὶ ζωή in v. 63 is a hendiadys; so also Brown, I, p. 297.

3. The term σάρξ is always used positively of Jesus in John's Gospel; see Introduction, pp. 19-20.

4. See Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, p. 154.

5. Dunn ('John VI', pp. 335-36) sees the evangelist as opposing docetic tendencies and speaks of his 'anti-docetic polemic' (in Dunn's view, somewhat crudely expressed); so also Schnackenburg, II, p. 68; O.S. Brooks, 'The Johannine Eucharist', *JBL* 82 (1963), pp. 296-300; and Borgen, 'Unique Vision', pp. 183-87, 192. Against this, cf. Cosgrove, 'Place Where Jesus Is', pp. 525-25, and Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, pp. 71-72.

eternal life; on the other hand, when suffused with πνεῦμα, it becomes the means of attaining life. It is this dynamic which is reflected in the two apparently contradictory statements of the role of σάρξ in vv. 53 and 63. Neither statement can be sacrificed to the demands of formal consistency. On a deeper level there is no contradiction between them. The scandal in these verses is located precisely in the ambiguity of σάρξ, in which disciples are given the choice of perceiving or rejecting the divine δόξα.[1] Like the visible world, the flesh is insignificant if seen as existing in an absolute sense, without reference to anything else.[2] Within and beyond it is another world of truth in which the incarnate flesh of Jesus plays an iconic role.[3] It is this latter perspective which the disciples reject in vv. 60-66.

Response of the Twelve. The statement of rejection implied in v. 66 is not finally where the narrative ends. The fifth Stage of the narrative has also a positive conclusion in this scene. The involvement of the Twelve in the narrative leads them in these verses to a re-commitment to discipleship and a deepening perception (vv. 67-70a) that goes beyond their understanding in 4.31-38. Even though their role in scene 3 has been that of onlookers, they have heard and believed the words of Jesus (with ῥήματα in v. 68 referring directly to the discourse). Simon Peter, and through him the other disciples (note the plural verbs in vv. 68-69), have penetrated the symbolic significance of Jesus' utterances. They understand that Jesus is speaking of life in its metaphorical and symbolic dimensions, a life that can only be found in relation to him (v. 68).

It is on this basis that the confession of faith is made (vv. 68-69). It signifies for the Twelve both the attainment of a symbolic understanding (Stage 4) and the affirmation of faith and discipleship (Stage 5). Here Peter, in Hoskyns' words, 'voices the faith and knowledge of the true believers, and in contrast to the Jews and to the unbelieving Christians, avoids crude materialism on the one hand and false

1. Bultmann, pp. 446-47.
2. Hoskyns, pp. 284-85.
3. See E. Schweizer, 'σάρξ', *TDNT*, VII, pp. 138-39, who points out that σάρξ is considered sinful only when linked to unbelief. On the other hand, Dunn ('John VI', p. 335) in line with an anti-sacramental interpretation, emphasises the role of the Spirit rather than σάρξ.

spirituality on the other'.[1] The understanding of the Twelve has thus developed from the initial misunderstanding of Philip and Andrew (vv. 7-9) to a growing awareness in Jesus' epiphany on the water (vv. 19-20), to full faith by the end of the narrative (v. 69). The disciples exemplify the maturation of faith, and their response provides a fitting climax to the narrative.

Nevertheless, even on this climactic note, the theme of rejection is still present. Within the inner circle of the Twelve, who have understood more deeply than anyone else and confessed their faith in Jesus, there persists the possibility of rejection. The response of Judas Iscariot, foretold here by Jesus, represents once again the negative side of Stage 5 (vv. 70b-71).[2] In this sense, he belongs with the disciples of vv. 60-66 (see v. 64) who have rejected Jesus and abandoned the way of discipleship.[3] Judas stands as a warning that, even within the heart of faith, unbelief and rejection can still exist. His betrayal of Jesus in the narrative of the Gospel represents the 'extremest possibility of unbelief'.[4] It exemplifies the point of John 6 that incipient faith and the movement towards discipleship do not guarantee anything. Even with the final confession of faith and commitment to discipleship (Stage 5), the possibilities for apostasy remain ominously present. Behind this lies the enigma of divine election which intersects with human choice (v. 65). With this mysterious interweaving of confession of faith and rejection, the narrative ends.

C. *Conclusion*

John 6 is a full symbolic narrative in which the five narrative Stages are present. It begins with the foundational 'sign' of the feeding and the image of bread, with its Passover connotations (Stage 1), which is initially understood only in materialistic terms (Stage 2). Through the ensuing dialogue, Jesus clarifies the meaning in symbolic terms (Stage 3). At first the crowd moves in a positive direction, struggling to understand the true meaning of the feeding and Jesus' identity. With

1. Hoskyns, p. 300.

2. Gnilka (pp. 51-52) describes the announcement of the betrayer as 'die dunkle Folie' to Peter's confession.

3. Judas plays a similar role in the narrative of 11.1–12.11; see below, pp. 221-22.

4. Bultmann, p. 447.

the central disclosure of the ἐγώ εἰμι saying (v. 35), the narrative turns dramatically and the crowd becomes increasingly alienated. This does not halt the process of elucidation involved in Stage 3. As the crowd/'Jews' become more hostile towards the revelation, the symbolic meaning continues to unfold. The full meaning is disclosed in the revelation of Jesus as the true bread from heaven on whose flesh human beings must feed in order to find life.

The narrative reaches its climax in the final response of disciples to the gift of life that Jesus both offers and embodies (Stages 4 to 5). Most reject the symbolic meaning that Jesus has unfolded through the narrative and turn away from following him. Only the inner circle of the Twelve understand and embrace the symbolic meaning in a full confession of faith. Even here, however, in the presence of Judas, unbelief and rejection remain. That most of the characters have responded negatively is part of the tragedy of John's Gospel (see 1.10). It is part of the nature of ὁ κόσμος (used in the negative sense) which can perceive life and meaning only within its own (materialistic) structures. The narrative of John 6 elucidates the symbolic meaning of Jesus as the bread from heaven, who gives life to those who believe through his incarnation and death, yet whose coming provokes also rejection.

Like other symbolic narratives, John 6 draws the reader into the struggle for faith through the drama of the narrative. For the implied reader, faith is the movement from a literal and materialistic apprehension of 'sign' and image to a metaphorical and symbolic one. Like John 5, this is achieved largely through negative identification with the crowd. Ironically, the more deeply Jesus elucidates the meaning of the symbolism, the more they are alienated from him. This challenges the reader to examine her own response to the revelation as it unfolds, and encourages her to respond in a radically different way. At the same time, the remnant of the Twelve (vv. 67-70a), like John the Baptist in John 3 and the Samaritans in 4.1-42, enables the reader to make a positive identification and so move consciously, as the narrative moves through its Stages, to faith.

The greatness of John's achievement lies in the way that the narrative structure, centred on symbol, discloses the evangelist's central theological insight: that in the incarnation material reality (σάρξ) is capable of bearing and disclosing the divine. Form and meaning belong together in the same way that, through the incarnation, σάρξ

and πνεῦμα are bound. The narrative form gradually unfolds the symbolic meaning through the long process of Stage 3, until it is disclosed in all its fullness. The meaning that is revealed in this dynamic interplay of narrative and symbol is that, in the human flesh of Jesus, the divine πνεῦμα is radically present. Jesus is the true bread from heaven who communicates the reality of πνεῦμα which alone can satisfy the human hunger for life. The symbolic narrative of John 6 enables the reader, in the context of the community of faith, to acknowledge her hunger for life and find its fulfillment in Jesus, the bread of life.

Chapter 6

JOHN 9.1-41: THE HEALING OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

John 9 is perhaps the best example of symbolic narrative to be found in the Fourth Gospel.[1] Its literary features alone make it something of a masterpiece.[2] Symbolism, irony, characterisation, all combine to make a highly dramatic composition which betrays the theological and artistic hand of the evangelist.[3] As with the previous narrative, John 9 consists of a 'sign' (the healing) and an image (light). The image of light, first introduced in the opening verses of the Prologue, is the basic image for life in the Gospel.[4] ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων (1.4-5).[5] The giving of sight to a man born blind is tied in the closest way, therefore, to the image of light. Together through the course of the narrative the two take on symbolic significance (vv. 5, 35-38). Image and 'sign' are also connected to two

1. See Painter, 'John 9', pp. 31-61 (above, Introduction, p. 19). J. Bligh ('Four Studies in St. John, I: the Man Born Blind', *HeyJ* 7 [1966], p. 133) speaks of the healing as 'a symbol, or an acted parable, of Christ's mystery of bringing spiritual light to mankind'.

2. Schnackenburg (II, p. 239) regards Jn 9 as a 'masterpiece of narrative which combines theological and historical strands with dramatic skill'. See also Brown, I, p. 376.

3. Martyn (*History and Theology*, pp. 23-62, esp. pp. 30-36) makes a good deal of the dramatic qualities of Jn 9. He describes vv. 8-41 as a 'dramatic expansion' of a miracle story (p. 26) and sees the text working on two levels: a healing story in the life of the historical Jesus and a drama reflecting events within the Johannine community (p. 30).

4. For the OT background to the image of light, see e.g. Gen. 1.3-5; Pss 27.1, 104.2, 119.105; Isa. 60.19-20, and Amos 5.18; esp. Isa. 60.1-3 on the link between light and glory (כבוד) in the context of darkness.

5. Barrett (p. 357) points out that light is 'not a metaphysical definition of the person of Jesus but a description of his effect upon the cosmos'.

Jewish festivals: the Sabbath, which we encountered in John 5,[1] and the feast of Tabernacles. John 9 contains in full the five basic Stages of symbolic narrative, beginning with the miracle and ending on a note of joyful confession, on the one hand, and rejection, on the other.[2]

There are two main characters in the narrative: the man born blind and the religious authorities (οἱ Φαρισαῖοι, vv. 13, 15, 16, 40, used interchangeably with οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, vv. 18, 22[3]). While we see something of the characteristic pattern of misunderstanding leading to understanding in dialogue with Jesus, John 9 is largely built around a series of interrogations in which Jesus himself is absent. It is mainly through these and the escalating of hostility that the man achieves illumination,[4] and the authorities become increasingly alienated. Jesus appears only in the opening and closing sections of the narrative, where, towards the end, it is his presence which brings the narrative to a climax both for the man and his opponents.[5] At the heart of the narrative is thus a double narrative movement which is closely linked to the contrasting images of light/darkness, sight/blindness (see 3.16-21).[6] The man progresses from blindness to sight while the Pharisees move in the opposite direction.[7] This is worked out through an

1. For the remarkable similarities, and also differences, between Jn 5 and 9, see above, Chapter 4, pp. 105-106.

2. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 218-20) sees all four stages of the faith-conversations present in the three levels of encounter: 'Heilsbegegnen', vv. 1-6; 'Heilsangebot- und Zeichen', vv. 7-17a; 'Vorläufiges Bekenntnis', vv. 17b-37; and 'Endgultiges Bekenntnis', vv. 38-41.

3. The change from οἱ Φαρισαῖοι in the first interrogation scene (vv. 13-17) to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the second (vv. 18-23) emphasises the link with Jn 5: the same rejection of Jesus is involved. From a diachronic perspective, Barrett (p. 360) and Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, pp. 42-43) rightly see the change of title as demonstrating the evangelist's lack of knowledge of Judaism before 70 CE.

4. Barrett (p. 354) describes the theme of illumination (φωτισμός) as the 'direct bestowal of life or salvation', thus placing it on the same level as bread or water in the Fourth Gospel.

5. Brown (I, p. 379) identifies two Johannine themes in Jn 9: the triumph of light over darkness (see 1.5; 12.35, 46)—acted out in the prophetic style of symbolic action—and the polemic between Jews and christians at the end of the first century CE.

6. See J.L. Resseguie, 'John 9: A Literary-Critical Analysis', in K. Gros-Louis and J.S. Ackerman (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (2 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), II, pp. 296-98.

7. See Brown, I, pp. 376-81, esp. p. 377, for an analysis of the dramatic skill of the narrative in regard to the 'portraits of increasing insight and hardening

increasing polarisation between the man and his interrogators.

The narrative of John 9 is set within a broader perspective of revelation and hostility. The link with Jesus' revelation in chs. 7–8 is particularly apparent in the motif of Tabernacles (*Sukkoth*, 7.2, 8, 10-11, 40; also 8.12; see Deut. 16.13-17).[1] The two images of light and water are part of the ritual symbolism of Tabernacles, where on each morning of the feast, water was drawn from Siloam and taken in procession to the Temple, and each evening lamps were lit in the Court of the Women to illuminate Jerusalem.[2] It is in this context that Jesus reveals himself to be the giver of living water (7.37-39) and light of the world (8.12). Both themes, and particularly the latter, form the background for the narrative of John 9. Hostility towards Jesus arises out of the transferral of the images of Tabernacles to Jesus himself.

The dialogue which precedes John 9 (8.12-59) begins with Jesus' self-revelation as τὸ φῶς τοῦ κοσμου. It is the second of the predicative ἐγώ εἰμι sayings in the Gospel, promising τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς to all who follow Jesus (8.12). Throughout the dialogue of John 8, the hostility of the 'Jews' and the self-revelation of Jesus intensify, each acting upon the other until the climax is reached in the disclosure of Jesus' pre-existence (πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγώ εἰμι, v. 58) and the attempt of his opponents to stone him (v. 59). Here the imagery of light and darkness, along with the intertwining of hostility and christological revelation, sets the scene for the narrative of John 9.

Similarly, revelation and hostility are present in the discourse of John 10.1-18 which follows John 9. Though it involves a change of imagery (shepherd/sheep as against light/sight) and is a separate unit in the Gospel, the discourse acts partly as a commentary on the narrative of John 9 (see 10.19-21).[3] The role of the Good Shepherd is

blindness'. So also Lightfoot, p. 199, who speaks of the blind man's movement from ignorance to illumination as counterbalanced by the 'progressive darkening of the Pharisees, his judges'.

1. Most commentators (e.g. Brown, I, p. 376; Schnackenburg, II, p. 189; Haenchen, II, p. 37; Talbert, pp. 143-63; and Marsh, p. 375) recognise the link between Tabernacles and Jn 9. Against this, cf. Yee, *Jewish Feasts*, pp. 43-47; cf. also W. Michaelis, 'σκηνοπηγία', *TDNT*, VII, pp. 391-92.

2. See *m. Sukk.* 4.9-10, 5.1-4; also J.C. Rylaarsdam, 'Feast of Booths', *IDB*, I, pp. 455-58; Yee, *Jewish Feasts*, pp. 70-82; Brown, I, pp. 306, 326-27, 343-44; and Schnackenburg. II, pp. 138-39, 152.

3. Cf. Bernard, II, p. 323; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 356; and Sanders, p. 246,

distinguished from that of those who destroy the sheep. The juxtaposition of the two chapters shows that the narrative of John 9 is an example of the Good Shepherd in action, who cares for and gives life to the sheep (especially 9.35-38). This is in contrast to the destructiveness of the religious leaders (especially 9.34; 10.10, 12-13). Again, like the discourse of 8.12-59, John 10 is both polemical (10.19-21, 31-33, 39) and revelatory (10.7, 11, 14, 30, 38). The same juxtaposition is present in John 9.

A. *Structure and Overview*

John 9 is a clear and lucid narrative sequence, without major literary problems. Bearing in mind its dramatic qualities, we may divide it into three acts (vv. 1-7, 8-34, 35-41), incorporating eight scenes in all. These form a concentric pattern in the first two and last two scenes (vv. 1-5, 40-41) which together create an *inclusio*. They provide balanced frames for the four central scenes of Act 2 which consist of the interrogations. There is a distinct advantage to this structure as against the more common suggestion of seven scenes in a chiastic pattern.[1] To focus on Act 2, scene 3 (vv. 18-23) as the centre of the narrative ignores the escalating of hostility which is the main feature of Act 2 and in which the fourth scene is the most important. Furthermore considerable weighting should be given to the frames of the narrative in Acts 1 and 3, including the contrasts and points of

who take the point further and argue that Jn 9 and 10 constitute a single narrative; also T.L. Brodie, 'Creative Rewriting: Key to a New Methodology', in P.J. Achtemeier (ed.), *SBL 1978 Seminar Papers 13-14: One Hundred Fourteenth Annual Meeting* (SBLSP, 13-14; 2 vols.; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), pp. 261-67, and J.A. Du Rand, 'A Syntactical and Narratological Reading of John 10 in Coherence with Chapter 9', in J. Beutler and R.T. Fortna (eds.), *The Shepherd Discourse of John 10 and its Context* (SNTSMS, 67; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 94-115. Quite apart from the change of imagery, Jn 10.1-18 develops its own themes independently of Jn 9 (esp. Jesus' laying down of his life as revealing the authenticity of the Shepherd, 10.11, 15, 17-18).

1. See MacRae, p. 124; and Duke, *Irony*, pp. 121, 188; also Martyn, *History and Theology*, pp. 26-27; Culpepper, *Anatomy*, pp. 73, 139; Resseguie, 'John 9', p. 295; and Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure*, p. 205. For Ellis, pp. 158-160, the chiasm is in five scenes extending from 9.1-38, with vv. 18-23 as the centre (vv. 40-41 belonging with Jn 10.1-21 [pp. 165-67]).

similarity between them. The schema for John 9 is as follows:

Act 1	*Healing of the Man and the Question of Judgment (9.1-7)*	
Scene 1:	Jesus and the disciples discuss the question of sin and judgment, introducing the basic polarities of the narrative: blindness/sight, darkness/light, vv. 1-5	a
Scene 2:	Jesus heals the blind man's sight, vv. 6-7	b
Act 2	*Interrogations and Escalating Conflict (9.8-34)*	
Scene 1:	Questioning of the man by his neighbours, vv. 8-12	
Scene 2:	Questioning of the man by the Pharisees and the beginning of conflict, vv. 13-17	
Scene 3:	Hostile interrogation of the man's parents by the 'Jews', vv. 18-23	
Scene 4:	Hostile interrogation of the man by the Pharisees and rejection of him, vv. 24-34	
Act 3	*Illumination of the Man and Judgment on the 'Jews' (9.35-41)*	
Scene 1:	The man is given 'sight' by Jesus, vv. 35-38	b′
Scene 2:	Jesus and the Pharisees discuss sin and judgment, using the polarities of blindness/sight, darkness/ light; they are condemned by Jesus and accused of sin, vv. 39-41	a′

This structure in three acts can be spelled out in more detail:

Act 1: Healing of Man Born Blind and the Question of Judgment (9.1-7)

(a) Act 2, scene 1 sets out in the barest terms the basic issue with which the narrative is concerned: the problem of a man blind from birth (v. 1) whose disability is attributed to sin (v. 2).[1]

(b) Jesus rejects the theodicy of the disciples (v. 3),[2] and reveals that the healing to follow is another of the 'signs'.[3] Though σημεῖον

1. Healings in the Fourth Gospel always deal with cases of severe suffering; see Gnilka, p. 75.

2. For the notion of parental sin transmitted to children, see Exod. 20.5 and Deut. 5.9. The idea behind the disciples' question in v. 2 is that parental or even foetal sin could result in a disability such as blindness in children; see Brown, I, p. 371; Bultmann, p. 330; and Barrett, p. 355. Lindars (p. 342) suggests that John is deflecting the issue away from past suffering to the future and the 'possibilities for God's purpose'; also Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, p. 44.

3. As Hasitschka (*Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 287) points out, Jesus reveals his works (φανερόω, v. 3) not during the feast of Tabernacles as his brothers request (7.3), but immediately after in Jn 9. Jesus once again distances himself from human initiative (see 2.4, 4.48, 11.6).

is not used until v. 16, the same signification is present in the ἵνα-clause of v. 3: φανερωθῇ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ.[1]

(c) The saying in v. 4 is probably a proverb,[2] with ἔργα and ἐργάζεσθαι (see also v. 3) recalling the narrative and christology of John 5.[3] It also points forward to the Sabbath (v. 14).[4] The saying is a difficult one. It is linked to the imagery of light and darkness, and is probably a reference to the coming judgment in the last scene of the narrative.[5]

(d) The ἐγώ εἰμι saying of v. 5 is a re-statement of its main occurrence at 8.12, where, as we have noted, it is part of the Tabernacles theme. As with the parallel statement at John 6.35, it is central to the narrative.

(e) In scene 2, Jesus takes the initiative in healing the man (v. 6) without preliminary dialogue, commanding him to wash away in the Pool of Siloam the clay with which Jesus has anointed his eyes (v. 7).[6]

1. This may be taken as expressing purpose or result. For the Semitic blurring of these categories, see C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn, 1965), pp. 142-43; M. Zerwick, *Biblical Greek Illustrated by Examples* (Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblici; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 4th edn, 1963) §351, and BDF §§391.3, 369.2.

2. C.H. Dodd (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963], p. 186) sees the saying as an example of 'proverbial wisdom', which fits awkwardly in its context; see also Brown, I, p. 372; Lindars, pp. 342-43; and Dewey, '*Paroimiai*', pp. 84, 94.

3. Though the pronouns are awkward in v. 4 (ἡμᾶς... με), they are probably original (see $\mathfrak{P}^{66, 75}$ B D) on the principle of *lectio difficilior*. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 227; Barrett, p. 357; and Beasley-Murray, p. 151.

4. Yee (*Jewish Feasts*, p. 44) points out that the catchword ἔργα (which recalls 5.17 and 7.21) 'foreshadows the Sabbath controversy to come'; also Gnilka, p. 75, who sees v. 4 as justifying Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and corresponding to 5.17.

5. See Odeberg, *Fourth Gospel*, pp. 311-12, who argues that v. 4 relates to 'the period beginning with the discursive judgment for those who, although having the possibility of seeing, condemn themselves to blindness because they reject the light that comes to them' (p. 312). Night in this sense refers to spiritual vision. Against this, cf. Schnackenburg, II, p. 242; Barrett, p. 357; and Marsh, p. 377, who argue that the saying refers to Jesus' departure and death.

6. Note the parallels with the healing of Naaman in 2 Kgs 5.10-13; so Brown, I, p. 373, and Sanders, p. 239. T.L. Brodie ('Jesus as the New Elisha: Cracking the Code', *ExpTim* 93 [1981–82], pp. 39-42) identifies a number of parallels with

The evangelist explains the christological significance of the name of the Pool.[1] The man obeys and finds healing.

(f) After setting the action in motion through the healing, Jesus disappears from the narrative until the last act.[2]

Act 2: Interrogations and Escalating Conflict (9.8-34)

(a) Immediately following the healing, the neighbours begin to question the man who was once a blind beggar (scene 1, vv. 8-12). In doing so, they raise a number of issues: the identity of the man (vv. 8-9), the way in which the 'sign' has taken place (vv. 10-11) and the identity of the healer (v. 12).[3]

(b) Scene 2 (vv. 13-17) introduces the Pharisees into the narrative, who now interrogate the healed man (v. 13), and the narrator adds the important information that the healing has taken place on the Sabbath (v. 14).[4]

(c) The Pharisees question the man as to how the miracle took place (v. 15)[5] and the identity of his healer (v. 17). They disagree among themselves about Jesus healing on the Sabbath (v. 16).[6]

(d) Having gained no satisfactory solution to the problem from the man, the 'Jews' now interrogate his parents (scene 3, vv. 18-23). They raise the question of the man's identity (vv. 18-19). His parents identify him but turn responsibility back to their son for the manner of his healing (vv. 20-21). The increasing seriousness of the situation now becomes apparent (v. 22): anyone confessing Christ is threatened

the Elisha story including the method of healing, washing in water, debate and questioning over the cure and the healer, and the confrontation between Elisha/Jesus and Gehazi/ Pharisees.

1. 'Siloam', which probably derives from the verb שׁלח meaning 'send' (*Siloach* = Σ(ε)ιλωαμ LXX, Isa. 8.6), is similar to 'Shiloh' in Gen. 49.10, which later developed messianic overtones; see Barrett, pp. 358-59, and Schnackenburg, II, p. 243.

2. Duke (*Irony*, p. 119) points out that vv. 8-34 represent Jesus' longest period of absence in John's Gospel; see Schnackenburg, II, pp. 246-47.

3. Brown (I, p. 377) argues that John's real interest lies in the interrogation scenes rather than the miracle. But this, as we will see, is a false dichotomy.

4. For this feature of biblical narrative, see above, Chapter 4, p. 102.

5. The imperfect tense of ἐρωτάω indicates a continuing process in the interrogations and not just a single question; see Morris, p. 484.

6. The breach of the Sabbath probably refers to Jesus' work of kneading in making the clay (*m. Sabb.* 7.2). It is unclear whether the act of anointing constituted a breach of the Sabbath; see Barrett, pp. 359-60. See above Chapter 4, pp. 102-103.

with being made ἀποσυναγωγός (see 7.13).[1]

(e) With the man's identity established, the Pharisees now interrogate the man for the second time in increasing perplexity (scene 4, vv. 24-34).[2] The hostility reaches a climax. The tide begins to turn and the man takes on a more aggressive role, refusing to answer any more questions about the healing (v. 26). The focus now shifts to Jesus' identity (vv. 24-25, 29-33).

(f) The man defends his own experience and his healer against the authorities with new courage and assertiveness (vv. 27, 30-33). As a result they abuse him and 'cast him out' (v. 34).

Act 3: Illumination of Man and Judgment on Pharisees (9.35-41)

(a) Jesus re-appears and seeks out the condemned man (v. 35a), asking him whether he believes in the Son of Man.[3] He takes the initiative here in Act 3, scene 1 (vv. 35-38), just as he does in Act 1,

1. The word ἀποσυναγωγός occurs three times in the Fourth Gospel (and nowhere else in the NT), either with γίνομαι (9.22, 12.42) or ποιέω (16.2). According to Martyn (*History and Theology*, pp. 37-62) the historical background to the term is found in the revision of the Eighteen Benedictions against the *minim* (c. 85 CE) which he interprets as directed against Jewish-Christians. See also J.L. Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 102-104; K.L. Carroll, 'The Fourth Gospel and the Exclusion of Christians from the Synagogue', *BJRL* 40 (1957–58), pp. 19-32; and W. Schrage, 'ἀποσυναγωγός', *TDNT*, VII, pp. 848-52. For arguments against Martyn's proposal, cf. R. Kimelman, '*Birhat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity', in E.P. Sanders *et al.* (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*. II. *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (London: SCM Press, 1981), pp. 226-44, and M. Goodman, *Society and State in Galilee, A.D. 132-212* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies; New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), pp. 106-107; see also Carson, pp. 369-72, and Talbert, p. 161. For a balanced discussion of the issue which sees the strengths, as well as the obvious problems of Martyn's proposal, see D.M. Smith, 'Judaism and the Gospel of John', in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jews and Christians* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 83-88, 97-98.

2. See Gnilka, p. 77.

3. It is probable that ἀνθρώπου is the correct reading here rather than θεοῦ. The external evidence supports it (e.g. $\mathfrak{P}^{66, 75}$ ℵ B D) and it is clearly the more difficult reading. The internal evidence also supports it, as the title 'Son of Man' is more appropriate to the theme of judging. See Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 228-29; Barrett, p. 364; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 253, 498; and Brown, I, p. 375.

scene 1. The man responds with a full confession of faith (v. 38).[1]

(b) In scene 2 (vv. 39-41), Jesus ironically confronts the Pharisees with their 'blindness'.[2] The question of sin and judgment raised in the first scene of the narrative is now resolved: it is they and not the man born blind who are under judgment.[3]

(c) Jesus sums up the dynamic of the narrative, using the basic images of blindness and sight. In the process he defends his sense of mission (εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον ἦλθον, v. 39). The Pharisees object (v. 40) and Jesus, seeming to agree with them, turns the objection against them. In one sense they do possess sight because they are theologically educated;[4] it only makes the reality of their blindness without excuse (v. 41).[5]

B. *John 9 as Symbolic Narrative*

How does the story of John 9 function as symbolic narrative? To answer this question, we need to begin with the structure of the narrative as a whole. It operates in a concentric pattern: the last Act returns in a sense to the beginning, yet in another sense moves beyond it. The first and third Acts are the two points in the narrative at which Jesus and the man meet; indeed, they are the only points at which Jesus

1. There is some doubt as to whether vv. 38-39a (ὁ δὲ ἔφη... εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς) are part of the original text. The majority of MSS support them, but the shorter reading is found in $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ ℵ* W and others. Brown (I, p. 375) argues for their omission on the basis of non-Johannine features (e.g. ἔφη, and προσεκύνησεν used in relation to Jesus); also C.L. Porter, 'John IX.38, 39a: A Liturgical Addition to the Text', *NTS* 13 (1966–67), pp. 387-394. However, it is more likely that the verses belong in the original and have been accidentally omitted; see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 229; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 254, 499; and Beasley-Murray, p. 151. Brown's objection to προσκυνέω seems to ignore the Johannine understanding of Jesus as the locus of true worship, replacing the Temple (2.21, 4.21-24); so Schnackenburg, II, p. 254.

2. Duke (*Irony*, pp. 117-126) argues that this episode captures 'the ironic structure of this entire Gospel in miniature' (p. 117).

3. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 210) points out that the coming of Jesus in John is primarily creative rather than destructive, but people pronounce judgment on themselves; see also Calvin, p. 254. For Dodd, Jn 9 demonstrates 'judgment in action' (pp. 357-58).

4. So Schnackenburg, II, p. 256; see also Whitacre, *Polemic*, p. 79.

5. Bultmann (p. 340) speaks of the verse as a 'radical reversal of the human condition'.

appears in the narrative. In both sections the theme of blindness/sight and the related images of light/darkness are present.[1] The narrative begins and ends with the same theological issue:[2] Who can justifiably be accused of sin? What is the nature of sin? ῥαββί, τίς ἥμαρτεν, οὗτος ἢ οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα τυφλὸς γεννηθῇ; (v. 2); ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει (v. 41c).[3] In this sense, both episodes parallel one another in literary form and theological meaning. The first Act represents the first Stage of the narrative and the last Act is the fifth Stage (vv. 35-41). What appears at first to be a literal healing is transformed, through the five Stages, into an experience of eschatological illumination.[4]

From this we can see that between Acts 1 and 3 a major shift takes place in the experience of the man born blind. The simple healing transmutes itself into something very different: an illuminating insight into the identity and significance of Jesus. Verse 39, in particular, reflects the transformation that occurs within the narrative; 'sight' has now taken on symbolic value rather than the literal sense of the opening scene. Act 2, therefore, takes the narrative through Stages 2 to 4, which is the movement from a material to a symbolic perspective, from sign in a literal sense to 'sign' in its Johannine meaning. The extraordinary feature of this movement in Act 2 is that, unlike other symbolic narratives, it happens not in dialogue with Jesus but under interrogation by the religious authorities.

Correspondingly, the narrative is concerned with the faith of the religious leaders. We saw at the beginning the double movement of the narrative which is largely responsible for its dramatic qualities. The two movements are interconnected in such a way that each gives rise to the other. As the interrogations progress, the Pharisees become

1. Odeberg (*Fourth Gospel*, pp. 310-12) relates vv. 4-5 to vv. 39 and 41, which show a correlation of themes of judgment, light and darkness.

2. See Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, p. 47: 'The collocation of blindness and sin forms an inclusion with the opening verses of John 9'; also Mlakuzhyil, *Christocentric Literary Structure*, p. 205.

3. Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, p. 44) sees the question of sin as central to the narrative: 'the entirety of John 9 is dominated by the question "Who is a sinner?"' On the question of sin in the narrative, see Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, pp. 283-342, esp. pp. 338-42.

4. Hoskyns (p. 359) summarises John's eschatological perspective thus: 'To see Him and recognize Him is perfect sight and enlightenment, is, in fact, the vision of God.'

increasingly hostile to Jesus and the man born blind. The Stages of the narrative in Acts 2 and 3 are equally concerned, therefore, with the deepening misunderstanding of the Pharisees: from the potential for faith to its outright rejection.[1] The journey away from faith corresponds precisely, though of course in the opposite direction, to the man born blind's journey towards faith. Indeed it is the interplay between the two which determines the outcome of the narrative. Once again everything hinges on v. 39, which contains the central dynamic of the narrative.

All this raises the question of what illumination and developing blindness mean in the narrative, and how they operate through its Stages. The issue here focuses particularly on the relationship between the man's initial experience of receiving sight (Act 1, scene 2) and his final experience of 'sight' (Act 3, scene 1). What is it that takes place in the intervening scenes between the two events? Through conflict, the man comes to perceive Jesus as τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου and the Pharisees reject him. This change of perception—both for the man and his opponents—occurs through the basic questions that arise out of the healing (vv. 1-7), which have three focal points:

1. The mechanics of the 'sign': How did the *healing* take place?
2. The identity and origins of Jesus: Is Jesus *'from God'* or is he a *sinner*?
3. The identity of the man born blind: Is he the *same man* whom we once knew as a blind beggar?[2]

These questions recur throughout the narrative with increasing animosity and play a decisive role in changing the story from a simple healing into a Johannine symbolic narrative.

Act 1: Healing—Stage 1 (vv. 1-7)

Act 1 functions to establish the foundational 'sign' and image of the narrative. Though it is not explicit, this is dependent also on the two feasts of Tabernacles and the Sabbath. Scene 1 presents the image of Jesus as light of the world (especially vv. 4-5) and scene 2 narrates the healing which will become, for the reader, a Johannine 'sign'

1. That the potential for faith exists for the 'Jews' is already clear from the character of Nicodemus in Jn 3.

2. Culpepper (*Anatomy*, p. 140) speaks of the 'how', the 'who', and the 'whence', with prominence being given to the latter two.

(vv. 6-7). The opening scenes focus particularly on how the giving of sight takes place (Question 1). The question may seem at first to be of little consequence for the narrative. However, it is asked three times (vv. 10, 15a, 26) and twice answered directly (vv. 11, 15b), which means that the healing is narrated three times in all. The emphasis given to the healing is linked to John's etymology of the name 'Siloam' in the substantive participle ἀπεσταλμένος.[1] In the Gospel of John, as we saw in the context of 4.1-42, water is a symbol of the regenerating, life-giving Spirit (3.5, 4.14, 7.37-39; see also 20.22-23) and relates also to the sapiential theme of Jesus as the revelation of Sophia–God.[2] The image of water, in other words, already has strong christological overtones in the Fourth Gospel. Here in Act 1 the significance of Siloam/ ἀπεσταλμένος is precisely what the narrative is about.[3] The name of the Pool, though it seems only a detail,[4] points to the christological and therefore symbolic significance of the narrative which is unfolded in the following scenes.[5]

Central Metaphor of John 9. Although in some respects the narrative of John 9 differs from previous symbolic narratives, the same metaphorical process through the Stages of the narrative is at work. There is one basic metaphor within the narrative, found in two

1. While it is possible to point to the liturgical overtones of the healing and its popularity in the early church's baptismal rites (see Hoskyns, pp. 363-65, and Brown, I, p. 381), there is also the danger of obscuring the christocentric nature of the 'sign'. Cf. Schnackenburg, II, pp. 257-58, and Barrett, p. 355, who argue that the evangelist does not have baptism in mind.

2. See above, Chapter 3, pp. 76-77.

3. Hasitschka (*Befreiung von Sünde*, pp. 291-92) argues that the evangelist's etymology emphasises that the healing power comes from Jesus rather than the water of the Pool. John's emphasis is certainly on Jesus as the source of healing but the symbolic significance of water in the Fourth Gospel as a symbol of the life-giving Spirit cannot be ignored.

4. Bultmann (p. 333) identifies this as allegory rather than symbolism. While the Pool has allegorical elements, however, it is also attached to the major symbol of water.

5. B. Grigsby ('Washing in the Pool of Siloam: A Thematic Anticipation of the Johannine Cross', *NovT* 27 [1985], pp. 227-35) sees the symbolism of Siloam as pointing to Jesus as the new Temple, the cleansing from sin effected in Jesus' death and the messianic theme of Jesus as dispenser of 'living water'. He argues that 'a symbolic anticipation of the believer's salvific "bath" appears to have been intended by the Evangelist' (p. 239).

metaphorical utterances. Significantly, both are found within the structural 'frames'. The first metaphorical indication is the ἐγώ εἰμι saying at v. 5. The second is its full elucidation at v. 39: εἰς κρίμα ἐγὼ εἰς τὸν κόσμον τοῦτον ἦλθον, ἵνα οἱ μὴ βλέποντες βλέπωσιν καὶ οἱ βλέποντες τυφλοὶ γένωνται. Although the reader could interpret the first part of the verse literally (giving sight to the blind, v 39a), the second part makes clear the absurdity of the literal (blinding those who have physical sight, v. 39b). The metaphor, which controls the entire narrative sequence, points to Jesus as the one who gives light to human beings. Thus the establishing of the metaphor in Act 1 gives the reader an implicit sense of the illuminating presence of Jesus throughout the narrative, especially in Act 2 where paradoxically he is absent.

Act 2: Interrogations and Conflict—Stages 2 to 4 (vv. 8-34)

Stage 2 begins in Act 2 of the narrative. In scene 1, the man under questioning by his neighbours and acquaintances shows little knowledge of his healer (οὐκ οἶδα, v. 12) apart from his name (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ λεγόμενος, v. 11).[1] He knows only the fact of his healing, which he understands purely in physiological terms. There is no implied criticism of the man born blind for this lack of knowledge; it represents simply the second Stage of misunderstanding. The man has not yet begun to conceive the gift of illumination that Jesus offers and has no real insight into the identity of his healer.[2] He does not yet understand the metaphorical import of Jesus' utterance in v. 5 nor its bearing on him.

The narrative moves to Stage 3 with the entry of the Pharisees in scene 2. As in the case of John 5, they are introduced into the narrative of John 9 to solve the theological dilemma posed by Jesus' healing on the Sabbath (vv. 13-14). The struggle for understanding (Stage 3) begins in the way the Pharisees raise the question of Jesus' identity in relation to the breaking of the Sabbath (Question 2). Their doubts and disagreement in this scene suggest at least an openness to belief in

1. Resseguie ('John 9', p. 298) sees the narrative in vv. 8-12 as taking on the form of a trial. This gives emphasis, in his view, to the theme of judgment throughout the narrative (p. 302). See also Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 296.

2. However Staley ('Stumbling in the Dark', p. 68) sees the man born blind, right from the beginning, trying to protect his healer (in contrast to the disabled man of Jn 5).

Jesus (πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἁμαρτωλὸς τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν; v. 16b). At the same time, the division among them (σχίσμα, v. 16c) is of immense importance for the narrative. It sets out the two alternative ways in which Jesus and his ministry are to be understood: either he is ἁμαρτωλός or παρὰ θεοῦ. The alternatives are artificial constructions of the evangelist and they determine the dramatic structure of the following scenes. They are typical of the Fourth Gospel, the phrase παρὰ θεου, in particular, being rich in Johannine connotations (see 6.46, 16.30).[1]

The two categories set before the man born blind and the Pharisees represent the κρίσις of the narrative. Here it is clear that the polarities of v. 16 do not belong to a philosophical dualism but arise out of the drama and are concerned with faith and judgment. The narrator presents a dualism of response to the revelation that results from the shining of the light.[2] This will become explicit in Act 3 of the narrative. Indeed, no small part of the irony of John 9 lies in the way the alternatives for interpreting the narrative are drawn up by the Pharisees themselves. Once again, it indicates the illuminating/judging presence of the light (see 3.18-21).

Being unable to answer the question of Jesus' identity in a satisfactory way (v. 16), the Pharisees now direct it to the man himself (v. 17a). The way in which the healing takes place—by washing in the Pool of Siloam—serves to focus attention on the christological question and compels the man to consider the question of Jesus' identity. He accepts the challenge and begins to struggle seriously with the issue. Moving beyond his earlier ignorance, he supposes that Jesus is a prophet (προφήτης ἐστίν, v. 17).[3] Though the title is an example of

1. Painter ('John 9', p. 32) comments that the phrase παρὰ θεοῦ can mean either a man of God, on the same level as prophet, or it can have the full Johannine sense, where it is more or less equivalent to Son of Man. Sanders (p. 40) suggests the translation 'the man from God'.

2. Dodd (*Interpretation*, pp. 210-11) following Bultmann, speaks of Jesus' ministry as provoking κρίσις in people's lives. See Bultmann, pp. 340-41, who regards the decision for or against faith as crucial for the narrative of Jn 9. Schnackenburg, II, p. 248, speaks of revelation as having a 'critical function'.

3. For a delineation of the steps by which the man comes to faith, see Brown, I, p. 377, and Hoskyns, pp. 355-56. While Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 221-22) normally identifies four steps of recognition in Jesus' conversations, she sees six steps in Jn 9: the man's ignorance (v. 11), Jesus is a prophet (v. 17), realisation by the man that he is now of age (v. 23), recognition of the insecurity of his opponents

Johannine misunderstanding, it also signifies the beginnings of understanding and is a characteristic feature of Stage 3 (see 4.19, 6.14). As we have seen with other narratives, the meaning of 'sign' and image is intimately bound up with the question of Jesus' identity. A symbolic understanding is inclusive of both.

Stage 3 continues in scene 3 where the Pharisees continue the search for understanding (vv. 18-23). At this stage, the narrative hints that they will finally reject Jesus as παρὰ θεοῦ. As against the man's efforts at understanding in scene 2, the narrator here presents the Pharisees in the negative role of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. The parents' fear and the threat of ἀποσυναγωγός in v. 22 confirm the negative characterisation of the 'Jews'. The scene centres on the man's identity (Question 3) first raised in Act 1 (vv. 8-9) and serves two functions in the narrative. In the first place, it gives the Pharisees the opportunity of rejecting the healing—and therefore Jesus. Since the man has offered them no way out of their dilemma (vv. 16-17), they attempt to resolve it by casting doubts on his identity. The man's parents foil the attempt (v. 20). They affirm his identity as their son born blind and the 'Jews' are again faced with the choice of accepting or rejecting Jesus.[1] Secondly, his parents' timid refusal to answer for him (vv. 21-22) turns the responsibility back to the man himself (αὐτὸν ἐρωτήσατε, v. 21). Once again the authorities will confront him with the christological question arising from his healing.

Final Interrogation and Rejection

The last scene is the climax of Act 2, in which the narrative moves through Stages 3 and 4. The Pharisees at once revert to the terms of the debate set out in v. 16 (v. 24). It is now clear that their misunderstanding has deepened and there is no longer division among them. However, they seek confirmation of their growing opposition to Jesus from the man himself, suggesting that they themselves are not fully

(v. 27), recognition that Jesus is from God (v. 30), and acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah (v. 38).

1. Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, pp. 47-48) sees the action of the parents as a 'terrible perfidy', in that they abandon their son to the sentence which they themselves fear. This is an overstatement. Morris, p. 487, is nearer the mark in his comment: 'Their reply is characterized by timidity and a complete readiness to submit to the authority of their questioners.' They act as a foil to the courageous attitude of their son. See also Resseguie, 'John 9', p. 299.

convinced (v. 24).[1] Once again, they present the man with alternative interpretations of Jesus' action, so that the man is pressed ironically to continue the struggle for understanding. While his answer in v. 25 shows misunderstanding, his dogged persistence in holding to the healing indicates an openness to further understanding. When the Pharisees again question him about the manner of his healing (v. 26), the man's answer reveals a maturing understanding. He begins to fight back, defending himself and his healer, and his sarcasm in v. 27a indicates a widening of the rift between them. He begins also to see through them.[2]

For the first time in the narrative, the man now raises the issue of discipleship (v. 27b). The force of the καί in this verse is the first sign that the man thinks of himself as a disciple of Jesus.[3] Already the illumination of Jesus is having its effect on the narrative, penetrating the darkness of the man's experience. This is confirmed in the following verse in which the authorities abuse the man precisely as a disciple of Jesus (v. 28). In v. 30, the focus again moves to the identity of Jesus. Here the man begins to draw out for himself the christological implications of his healing (vv. 30-33). Ironically, he begins to teach the Pharisees and to bear witness to Jesus.[4] Compelled by them to choose between an understanding of Jesus as ἁμαρτωλός or παρὰ θεοῦ, he grasps hold of the latter. Because of the theological framework in which the debate is set, the man begins to realise that, unless he is to deny the reality of his own experience, his healer cannot be anything but παρὰ θεοῦ. The man is pushed to move beyond the literal level and take seriously the symbolic significance of his healing.

To reject Jesus and side with the Pharisees is now impossible for the man born blind. He has fought too hard to maintain both his own identity and the reality of his restored sight. He begins to think through the theological implications: Jesus cannot be a Sabbath-breaker and sinner, he reasons, since God would not listen to such a one and his extraordinary healing would be inconceivable (vv. 31-

1. The oath the Pharisees make in v. 24 (δὸς δόξαν τῷ θεῷ) is ironical: the man will give glory to God but in a radically different way from that demanded of him by the Pharisees. See Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 298.
2. So Schnackenburg, II, p. 251.
3. See Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 300.
4. Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, pp. 298, 303.

32).[1] By this reasoning, he reaches the conviction that εἰ μὴ ἦν οὗτος παρὰ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἐδύνατο ποιεῖν οὐδέν (v. 33).[2] He is constrained by the logic of his own experience to move to a deeper understanding of Jesus.[3] In doing so, he opens himself to the illumination of Jesus in its symbolic meaning. At this point the man has moved beyond the literal and attained a symbolic understanding (Stage 4).

The same process, though in the opposite direction, is present in the experience of the Pharisees. In v. 28b they introduce the figure of Moses (in relation to the Sabbath; see 7.22-24).[4] By calling themselves Moses' disciples in an absolute sense, and over against Jesus, they move closer to a rejection of Jesus' identity as παρὰ θεοῦ. They create an artificial opposition between disciples of Jesus and disciples of Moses (v. 28), between God's revelation in Moses and that in Jesus (v. 29). As we know from 5.45-47, this is a false dichotomy and shows profound misunderstanding. Jesus and Moses are not in opposition: 'Der wahre Jünger Mose ist im Grunde darauf augerichtet, Jünger Jesu zu werden.'[5] The revelation of Moses both points to and gives way before its fuller manifestation in Jesus (see 5.47, 6.31-33). By isolating Moses from Jesus and denying knowledge of Jesus' identity (τοῦτον δὲ οὐκ οἴδαμεν πόθεν ἐστίν, v. 29b), the Pharisees, in John's worldview, reveal a fundamental misunderstanding not only of Jesus but also of their own traditions.

From this it follows that the identity of the man born blind is increasingly bound up with that of Jesus.[6] This is largely the work of the Pharisees and leads to their rejection of the man himself, as well as Jesus. The interrogation in scene 4 is framed with the question of sin, firstly in relation to Jesus (ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος

1. The idea of God neither listening to nor answering the prayers of sinners is found in the OT (e.g. Ps. 66.18; Isa. 1.16; Mic. 3.4); also *t. Ber.* 6b and *Exod. Rab.* 21.3. See Schnackenburg, II, pp. 252, 498.

2. Unlike Jn 5, it is not Jesus who now defends his Sabbath work but the man born blind; see Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 306.

3. Rensberger (*Overcoming the World*, p. 45) comments that the man clings to the reality of his own experience 'in defiance of those who... are in charge of communal norms and their interpretation'.

4. Barrett (p. 354) emphasises the comparison between Jesus and Moses in the narrative. Moses is the giver of the Sabbath, the breach of which is the real issue of debate for the 'Jews' (vv. 16, 28-29); see also Jn 5.

5. Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 301.

6. See Resseguie, 'John 9', p. 300.

ἁμαρτωλός, v. 24) and then in regard to the man himself (ἐν ἁμαρτίαις σὺ ἐγεννήθης ὅλος, v. 34). It forms an *inclusio* incorporating the man into the indictment of sin which the authorities direct at Jesus. He shares with Jesus the same false accusation of sin.[1] By the end of the scene, it becomes clear that the Pharisees have refused the option of παρὰ θεοῦ in favour of ἁμαρτωλός. The point is confirmed in the way they reject the man and cast him out of the synagogue (καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω, v. 34).[2] By this action they show that they have also rejected Jesus as the light of the world. Stage 4 of the narrative portrays not only the man's attainment, but also the Pharisees' rejection, of a symbolic understanding.

Throughout Act 2 the man thus becomes more and more positively disposed towards Jesus. Indeed his attainment of a symbolic understanding is dependent (at least in part) on the increasing sense of alienation from his interrogators, the Pharisees (see v. 27). Behind it lies the illuminating/judging work of the Johannine Jesus. The evangelist makes it clear in this Act that there is no middle course, no possible stance of indifference or agnosticism towards Jesus. The fact that no-one is more acutely aware of this than the opponents of Jesus is itself part of the irony. Whether in the mouth of Jesus' opponents or in the words of Jesus himself, the evangelist's point is the same: human beings must choose to accept or reject the light. No other option is possible. There is only the path taken by the man born blind or that of the Pharisees.

Act 3: Illumination/Judgment—Stage 5 (vv. 35-41)

The final moment of enlightenment occurs in Act 3, which represents Stage 5 of the narrative. Here both the man born blind and the Pharisees make their definitive response to Jesus. The man's response is made possible only by the preceding scenes and, in particular, by his final break with the synagogue. Though it is the authorities who precipitate it, the man has provoked their response through a

1. See Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, p. 47.

2. Assuming (with Schnackenburg, II, p. 252; Haenchen, II, p. 40; Barrett, p. 364; Marsh, p. 385; Gnilka, p. 79; and Carson, p. 375) that ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω—an emphatic phrase repeated in the following verse (vv. 34-35)—refers to ἀποσυναγωγός in v. 22. For the contrary view, cf. Brown, I, p. 375, who argues that the man is merely thrown out of the presence of the Pharisees; also Bernard, II, p. 337.

developing sense of alliance with Jesus and corresponding alienation from the Pharisees (vv. 30-33). Through the experience of hostility at the hands of the authorities in Act 2, he is paradoxically prepared for the illumination of faith in Act 3, scene 1. While the narrator stresses the initiative taken by Jesus in this scene (εὑρὼν αὐτὸν εἶπεν, σὺ πιστεύεις...; v. 35),[1] the man himself is entirely responsive to Jesus' question. By the end of the narrative, he is ready to make the final leap of faith (τίς ἐστιν, κύριε, ἵνα πιστεύσω εἰς αὐτόν; v. 36).

In scene 1, the man both sees and 'sees' Jesus for the first time in the narrative (v. 35).[2] He sees in the literal sense because, as we noted earlier, the healing takes place in Jesus' absence (v. 7). Now for the first time he comes face-to-face with his healer. He 'sees' also in the symbolic sense because Jesus reveals himself as Son of Man and invites him to respond to the revelation with faith: 'In zweifacher Weise macht Jesus den Blinden sehend: er schenkt ihm das Augenlicht und er schenkt die Erkenntnis, wer er ist.'[3] The two levels of seeing, the literal and the symbolic, perfectly cohere in the last Act. Indeed an important feature of the drama is the skilful way in which the narrator has fused the two moments of seeing. The man articulates his experience of illumination by making the confession of the believing community (see 4.23) and committing himself to discipleship (v. 38). Through conflict and interrogation he moves from ignorance of his healer to a strong and assertive declaration of faith in Jesus.

The final scene resolves the question of the man's identity and reveals its essential irony. For the Pharisees in Act 2, the question of whether the blind man and the healed man are one and the same person is an attempt to disprove the healing and reject Jesus. In an ironical way, however, the man's identity does change through the course of the narrative. In being allied with Jesus as a result of the hostility of the Pharisees, thrown out of the synagogue and, in the final Act, drawn into confessing Jesus as Son of Man, the man born blind moves from an old identity to a new one. The transformation from healing story to symbolic narrative is the story of his own trans-

1. Hasitschka (*Befreiung von Sünde*, pp. 284-85, 310) rightly interprets the initiative taken by Jesus in his two encounters with the blind man as a point of major importance. It indicates that only Jesus is able to rescue human beings from blindness/darkness and lead them to faith.

2. See Painter, 'John 9', p. 43.

3. Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 285.

formation, his own appropriation of symbolic meaning. He moves out of the synagogue, out of ignorance, into the community of the 'children of light' (12.36).[1] Once again, we find in John's narrative technique the coherence of form and meaning.

From the perspective of the final Act, we can now look back at the trial scenes of Act 2 and see the paradoxical way in which the imagery of light functions. In spite of the hostility of the authorities and the absence of Jesus, τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου shines through to illuminate the man. The three questions that repeat themselves throughout the narrative impel him to move through misunderstanding to a second level understanding. Ironically, conflict is the catalyst that leads to the 'allmähliches Geöffnetwerden der inneren Augen des Mannes.'[2] It takes the place of Jesus' clarifying presence in other symbolic narratives, yet operates in a parallel way. In John 9, as elsewhere, the narrative is created precisely by the struggle to move from a literal to a symbolic perception. In struggling to understand his own experience, the physical event becomes for the man born blind in the last Act a true σημεῖον, a symbol of eschatological wholeness. The illuminating presence of Jesus is implicit throughout the conflict. He acts as the light of the world even in his absence. That is the meaning of his epiphany in the third Act to the man born blind.

The Pharisees. It is equally clear by the end of Act 2 that the Pharisees have rejected the symbolic meaning of the narrative. Their final statement of rejection is found in Act 3, scene 2, where judgment is pronounced against them (vv. 39-41). Jesus' exposure of their blindness and the evil of their 'works' (9.4; see 3.20) is a commentary on the narrative and their harsh treatment of the man born blind. Their objection to being accused by Jesus of blindness in v. 40—μὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς τυφλοί ἐσμεν;—is in effect a statement of rejection.[3] It is reinforced by Jesus' final words of condemnation in v. 41: the Pharisees are not blind in the sense of the man born blind, since εἰ τυφλοὶ ἦτε, οὐκ ἂν εἴχετε ἁμαρτίαν,[4] but in an entirely different

1. See Painter, 'Quest and Rejection Stories', p. 37.

2. Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, p. 221.

3. The Greek μή is intended here in its full force: it expects the answer 'no' and articulates the sense of outrage felt by the authorities.

4. There are parallels to this utterance in the Farewell Discourse. See 15.22, which concerns Jesus' words (εἰ μὴ ἦλθον καὶ ἐλάλησα αὐτοῖς, ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ

way.[1] The problem is their complacency in assuming that they already possess 'sight'. They do not recognise the need for enlightenment.

In the last words of the narrative, the notion of sin is turned radically on its head. The imputation of sin is transferred from the man and Jesus (vv. 2, 16, 24, 34) to the religious leaders: ἡ ἁμαρτία ὑμῶν μένει (v. 41b). The refusal to open themselves to the illumination of Jesus signifies their rejection of the symbolic meaning of the narrative. It leaves them finally in the place of sin and darkness.[2] Here the evangelist reveals his understanding of sin, which has more to do with the rejection of life than moral failings: 'Sünde ist also nicht in erster Linie eine moralische Verfehlung (Übertretung eines Gebotes), sondern die fehlende Bereitschaft, Gottes Zuwendung und Selbstmitteilung in Jesus, dem menschgewordenen Wort, aufzunehmen.'[3] Once again, in spite of the physical absence of Jesus, the light of the world has shone: not this time to enlighten but in order to expose sin and the tragedy of darkness which the 'Jews' have freely chosen (ἠγάπησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι μᾶλλον τὸ σκότος ἢ τὸ φῶς, 3.19).

Act 3 thus brings to a climax the double movement of the narrative. The man born blind, whose experience exemplifies the saving purpose of the light (ἵνα σωθῇ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ, 3.17), moves from blindness to sight, choosing light in place of darkness and understanding in place of ignorance. The movement of the Pharisees lies in exactly the opposite direction. They move from 'sight' to blindness and in doing so choose the darkness and ignorance of unbelief. This is profoundly ironical. What appears to be unalterable blindness (the man born blind) turns out to be receptive to sight, and what appears to be sight (the 'Jews') turns out to be finally an irredeemable blindness.

εἴχοσαν· νῦν δὲ πρόφασιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν περὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν), and 15.24, which concerns his deeds (εἰ τὰ ἔργα μὴ ἐποίησα ἐν αὐτοῖς ἃ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἐποίησεν, ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ εἴχοσαν· νῦν δὲ καὶ ἑωράκασιν καὶ μεμισήκασιν καὶ ἐμὲ καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου). The latter offers a particularly striking parallel to Jn 9, with its focus on Jesus' deeds and the image of sight (ἑωράκασιν).

1. See Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, pp. 329-30, on the two different kinds of blindness acted out in the narrative.

2. According to Calvin (p. 244) the Pharisees, in antithetical parallel, 'being wilfully blind in the sunlight... bring on themselves darkness which obscures its light'.

3. Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 328.

The narrative closes in Stage 5 with the faith and vindication of the man born blind and the unbelief and condemnation of the authorities.[1]

C. *Conclusion*

In the narrative of John 9, the same process we have seen in other symbolic narratives is at work. The central images develop through the narrative in such a way as to discard the literal meaning and uncover the metaphorical. John 9 is a full symbolic narrative, containing the five Stages of the narrative. Through them the symbolic meaning emerges and evokes the response of faith/unbelief. This process happens, however, in a somewhat different way from other narratives. The negation of the literal level is effected through interrogation and conflict. Through persecution the man reaches a metaphorical understanding and makes a full confession of faith, while his interrogators reject the symbolic meaning.

In one sense, the negation of the literal level is precisely the intention of the Pharisees in their attempts to cast doubts on the man's identity and the reality of his healing. In another sense, however, the text itself moves toward a negation of the literal level. The narrator effects this not by destroying the reality of the 'sign' as the Pharisees are intent on doing, but rather by encouraging the characters to move beyond—though not against—the literal sense. Thus in the narrative of John 9 the literal meaning (the giving of physical sight/ light) is not so much destroyed or nullified as transcended. The man born blind discovers, unlike his counterpart in John 5, that it is not enough to be satisfied with physical sight. The gift of sight raises questions for him concerning the identity of the giver and the meaning of the gift. The quest for understanding leads him, through painful struggle, to the illuminating recognition of Jesus as τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.

This process differs from other symbolic narratives in that it does not occur primarily in dialogue with Jesus. On the contrary, as we have seen, Jesus is absent for a large part of the drama. Instead the dialogue with Jesus is replaced in Act 2 by conflict with the Pharisees. The man attains understanding 'not in a reflective encounter with

1. Bultmann (p. 341) speaks of blindness and sight taking on definitive meaning with the coming of the light; judgment in v. 41 is the experience of a deluded person 'holding onto the delusion that he can see'. See Lightfoot, p. 201; Barrett, p. 366; and Lindars, p. 352.

Jesus, as Thomas and the Samaritan woman do, but in the process of *confrontation* with the Pharisees'.[1] In other words, in Act 2 the authorities end up playing a role in his faith development which is parallel to that of Jesus in other symbolic narratives. By posing the questions in the way they do and grouping the man with Jesus, the Pharisees succeed, ironically, in propelling him towards an open avowal of faith in Jesus:

> his progress upward seems at least partially assisted by the downward plunging Pharisees, who give him opportunity to reflect on Jesus' identity, think of the man's discipleship before he does (vs. 28), and then cast him into the very presence of Jesus (vs. 34).[2]

The increasing hostility has the same effect in developing the man's faith as Jesus' clarifying responses have in other narratives.[3] The Pharisees are the ones who, albeit unwittingly, enable the man to move from a literal to a symbolic understanding. It is the deepest irony of the narrative.

Nevertheless, in pushing the man towards Jesus, they themselves become increasingly alienated from him. The narrative of John 9 is equally the story of the Pharisees, who encounter the illumination of Jesus, yet reject it because they cannot admit their need of it. In seeing Jesus as a Sabbath-breaker and sinner, the Pharisees, like the 'Jews' in John 5,[4] reject the deeper meaning of the 'sign' and refuse to recognise Jesus as the light of the world. In this sense, they reject not only Jesus but also their own traditions and rituals (Tabernacles, the Sabbath, Moses). They deny their own identity as 'disciples of Moses' (v. 28). The repudiation of Jesus is so complete that, in the symbolic terms of the narrative, they are left finally in the darkness of sin and rejection (v. 41).

The narrative of John 9 gives an important theological perspective to the reality of the world's hostility which is a prominent theme in

1. Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*, p. 46.

2. Duke, *Irony*, p. 125.

3. Collins ('Representative Figures I', p. 43) sees both men as representative and 'antithetically symbolical to the point that one cannot be understood without the other'.

4. The narrative of Jn 9 brings to full expression what is only partial in Jn 5. This is particularly true of the characterisation of the two men and the full faith development of the man born blind. Jn 9 builds on the theological framework of Jesus' Sabbath work and brings it to completion through the Stages of the narrative.

the Farewell Discourse (15.18-25; 16.1-3, 8-11, 33; 17.14-16). At 17.15, for example, Jesus prays that the believing community may be protected from the malice and hostility of the world. The apparent contradiction of a community which faces the world's hostility, yet is also protected from it, is in a sense resolved in John 9. Far from being a negative experience, the authorities' attempt to coerce the man into denying himself and his healer becomes a positive experience of illumination. The Pharisees' rejection of the light exemplifies the world in its willful blindness and destructiveness (1.10-11), which, in an ironical way, can open the eyes of τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ to the world's darkness and the saving power of the light. The destructiveness of the world represented by the blindness of the Pharisees, therefore, far from placing an obstacle in the way of God's salvific plan (see 12.39-41),[1] becomes a creative experience in the life and witness of the man born blind.[2]

Theological Significance of σάρξ *and* δόξα

A key question for the narrative of John 9 is how, as readers of the Gospel, we are to understand the gift of sight/light offered by Jesus.

1. See Hasitschka, *Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 337 (also pp. 330-36).

2. The interlocking of hostility/polemic and revelation in Jn 9 has an important socio-historical dimension. We have seen how, according to Martyn, Jn 9 operates simultaneously on two levels: the historical ministry of Jesus and the context of persecution in the Johannine community (see above, p. 161). Here it is possible to see the way in which literary and socio-historical approaches are complementary in the study of a narrative such as Jn 9. From a literary perspective, the narrative describes the man's movement from a literal experience of sight to a symbolic understanding. In socio-historical terms, it is a drama that describes the historical movement of the Johannine community out of the synagogue into a separate community with its own identity and self-consciousness See also J.M. Lieu, 'Blindness in the Johannine Tradition', *NTS* 34 (1988), p. 90, who suggests that the notion of two groups, the one possessing sight and the other permanently blinded, is a result of the sense of exclusion from the synagogue and produces a sectarian consciousness in the Johannine community. Revelation, in other words, serves a polemical purpose: to move to a symbolic understanding, in Johannine terms, is to move out of the synagogue into the new community. The two perspectives operate in tandem. The function of Jn 9 within the community is to provide a legitimation for its independent existence and identity. In literary terms, the narrative enables the reader to move from a material to a symbolic level of perception. Both movements—the socio-historical, from synagogue to Johannine community, and the literary, from material to symbolic perspective—represent for the evangelist the response of faith.

As with John 6, the implied reader identifies more and more positively with the man born blind, an easy task for the reader since his characterisation is so developed and attractive.[1] The framework set out in the first and last scenes enables the reader to move from a literal to a symbolic understanding. She too comes to share the illumination of the man. At the same time, through the conflict scenes in Act 2, she is drawn into the alternatives posed by the narrative, becoming increasingly alienated from the Pharisees and their view of Jesus as a sinner. Finally she accepts Jesus as being 'from God' in the deepest sense. Like the man born blind, she comes to 'see' Jesus with the eyes of faith.

Behind this perspective lies John's incarnational theology in which human life is illuminated by the divine glory in the human flesh of Jesus. The narrative of John 9 is both shaped by and gives rise to this theology. Once again, it reflects the dynamic interplay of form and meaning. Symbolic existence is made possible only by the descent of the divine Logos whose work in creation is manifested in the salvific work of Jesus. We are dealing here primarily with an eschatological outlook, although ontological concerns cannot be ruled out. The evangelist is concerned with the transforming of present existence in the light of the future. This transformation happens through a symbolic apprehension of the divine light which enters the world (1.9), overcoming its darkness (1.5),[2] and enabling it to find a new eschatological identity (1.12-13).

The healing or gift of sight in John 9 belongs in this sense to the world of σάρξ. For the evangelist, miracles on a physical level do not necessarily lead to faith in Jesus. On the contrary, they may provoke the opposite reaction, as we saw in John 5 and 6. In these narratives, the evangelist is concerned with the symbolic potential of physical needs. The man's experience of healing therefore has no meaning in itself. It lies within the bounds of the material world. Strictly speaking, it is not the restoration of sight, since the man has never possessed it, but rather the gift of sight which is a gift of creation.[3]

1. Resseguie ('John 9', p. 303) speaks of the man moving from a colourless character to 'an engaging, attractive personality... who badgers the authorities with irony and sarcasm'.

2. The *double entendre* of the verb καταλαμβάνω in 1.5 is significant here: the darkness can neither grasp/understand nor defeat/overcome the light.

3. So Duke, *Irony*, p. 119.

The point is reinforced by the reference to the clay (v. 6) which parallels the 'dust of the earth' in Gen. 2.7 out of which God creates Adam (עפר מן-האדמה).[1] The giving of sight to the man born blind is an act which relates to σάρξ. It is the action of the Logos as agent of creation (1.2-3a, 10).

In John 9, the symbol of light/illumination occurs in the context of the world's darkness as represented by the Pharisees. The evangelist offers no theological explanation for the existence of darkness (καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτία φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν, 1.5). It is in the context of this darkness, however, that Jesus reveals himself, not only as agent of creation (Act 1, scene 1), but also as the eschatological Son of Man (Act 3, scene 2). The title refers to Jesus' role as revealer and judge on behalf of God: καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν, ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν (5.27).[2] In giving eternal life, Jesus as Son of Man reveals that δόξα which is the life-giving radiance of God and which overcomes the world's darkness. For this the flesh is essential. Only because the divine Logos has become one with creation can human darkness be vanquished (1.9, 14). Only on this basis can human beings experience birth ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος (3.6) in order to become τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ (1.13).[3]

The fact that it is the Logos who offers a new eschatological identity is important for two reasons. First the world is his by right of

1. A number of commentators, following Irenaeus (*Ag. Her.* v.15.2), take this view; e.g. Calvin, p. 242; Bernard, II, p. 328; Hoskyns, p. 354; Lindars, p. 343; and Sanders, pp. 238-39. Some, such as Marsh, p. 378; Barrett, p. 355; and Newbigin, p. 119, relate this to the fact that the man is blind ἐκ γενετῆς (v. 1). See also Painter, 'John 9', p. 42. It is important not to import the later doctrine of original sin into the narrative, as Painter ('John 9', p. 37) tends to do: 'all men are blind from birth and every man is in the darkness until Jesus gives him light'. In v. 3, Jesus rejects the link between blindness and sin. The narrative is not concerned with original sin, but rather with the point that no sin is attached to blindness in the sense of ignorance (vv. 39-41).

2. For Moloney, *Son of Man*, pp. 142-159, the title here, as elsewhere in John, refers to revelation and judgment: 'Jesus is presented as the unique revealer of God, and consequently as the place of judgment' (p. 159). M. Pamment ('The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel', *JTS* 36 [1985], pp. 56-66) argues that it refers to Jesus' representative humanity. Cf. M. Müller, '"Have You Faith in the Son of Man?" (John 9.35)', *NTS* 37 (1991), pp. 291-94, who tries to argue that here, as elsewhere in John, the term is strictly non-titular.

3. See Painter, 'John 9', p. 48.

creation. The κόσμος belongs to him because its origins lie in the creative will of God which is brought to expression in him (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, 1.3; ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, 1.10). Secondly, because the world fails to recognise its origins and rejects its creator (ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω, 1.10) condemning itself to darkness and death,[1] the Logos has penetrated the world, bringing with him the light and life of God.[2] It is here at the point of incarnation, the point at which the divine and human realms are fused, that the eschatological illumination of human existence takes place.[3]

1. Hasitschka (*Befreiung von Sünde*, p. 338) points out that the coming of the light provokes sin as well as rescuing people from its power.

2. MacRae ('Irony', p. 88) suggests that the Logos-conception 'denotes not merely the fact of the incarnation, but the conflict created by the act of judgment in the human sphere on the part of the revealing word of God'.

3. According to Painter ('John 9', p. 51), who is helpful on this point, the transformation is rooted in the creation of human beings by the Logos who are 'created to respond to God's Word'. This, he argues, is 'the Johannine equivalent of man created in the *image of God* in Genesis'. See above, Introduction, p. 19.

Chapter 7

JOHN 11.1–12.11: THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

The story of the Raising of Lazarus is the last of the symbolic narratives of the Fourth Gospel (11.1–12.11).[1] It is a full narrative which shows the hand of the evangelist throughout.[2] In many respects it forms a climax to the first half of the Gospel, representing the high point of the public ministry of Jesus. It is concerned not with disability and healing but with life and death. In dealing so directly with the

1. Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 363, describes Jn 11.1-53 as a 'didactic dialogue containing symbolic narrative by way of illustration'.

2. See B. Henneberry, 'The Raising of Lazarus (John 11.1-44): An Evaluation of the Hypothesis that a Written Tradition Lies behind the Narrative' (dissertation, Leuven, Katholieke Universiteit, 1983), pp. 1-64, who argues, without denying the evangelist's use of traditional material (in some form or another), that the narrative of John 11.1-44 is 'pervaded with John's style' (p. 208). See also Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 363: 'there is no story of the Raising of Lazarus—or none that we can now recover—separable from the pregnant dialogues of Jesus with His disciples and with Martha'. The Lazarus story is smoother and more sophisticated as a literary unity than other narratives. However, there are a number of scholars who would dispute this. Cf. Fortna, *Fourth Gospel and its Predecessor*, pp. 94-109, esp. pp. 104-108, and G. Rochais, *Les récits de résurrection des morts dans le Nouveau Testament* (SNTSMS, 40; Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 124-29. Cf. also J. Wagner, *Auferstehung und Leben: Joh 11,1-12,19 als Spiegel johanneischer Redaktions- und Theologiegeschichte* (Biblische Untersuchungen, 19; Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1988), pp. 95-334, who argues that Jn 11.1-12.19 as a unit contains a considerable number of aporias (for a list of these see pp. 29-42) which points to a three-stage tradition history: the final redactor, the evangelist and the basic narrative stratum (see esp. pp. 329-34). See J.J. Bridges, *Structure and History in John 11: A Methodological Study Comparing Structuralist and Historical Critical Approaches* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991) who, comparing the work of G. Rochais and J.R. Jones, concludes that both literary-critical and historical-critical approaches, within a broader sensitivity to the narrative of the Gospel, are necessary to understand the text of Jn 11.

imagery that lies at the core of the Gospel, it is the greatest of the Johannine 'signs'. Furthermore, within the broader narrative framework of the Gospel, the story plays a critical role. Not only does it bring the public ministry of Jesus to a climax, but, through the conversion of many of the mourners, it also sets in motion the second half of the Gospel.[1] The plot by members of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus, leading into the Passion narrative, is the direct result of the raising of Lazarus. It is the central, pivotal scene of the Gospel, holding together narrative structure and theological meaning.[2]

The story of the Raising of Lazarus becomes symbolic in the five Stages of the narrative which are fully present. Although it contains the essential features of symbolic narrative, however, Jn 11.1–12.11 differs from other narratives in two important ways. First, the basic σημεῖον occurs not at the beginning, as in other narratives, but midway through the narrative. In addition, a second narrative seems to be imposed upon the Lazarus story: the story of Jesus' movement towards the cross. As the narrative progresses, Jesus' story is seen to be the symbolic heart of the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus' journey from death to life becomes symbolic of Jesus' journey from death to life to give life to believers. It is the inner meaning of the 'sign'.

There are a number of characters who play a role in the story, apart from Jesus. While Lazarus seems at first to be the central character, his role is a passive one and the text has little to say about his faith. The central characters are Martha and Mary, who play a major role in the narrative.[3] It is their movement to a deeper faith and a symbolic understanding with which the narrative is primarily concerned. Also important are the disciples of Jesus (presumably the inner group) and the 'Jews'.[4] The role of the disciples in the opening

1. See A. Marchadour, *Lazare: histoire d'un récit, récits d'une histoire* (Paris: Cerf, 1988), pp. 91-10, for a discussion of the place of the narrative within the framework of the Gospel in scholarly opinion. He identifies three hypotheses: it concludes the first section of the Gospel; it begins the second section; it is the centre of the Gospel. Marchadour rightly prefers the latter view.

2. See B. McNeil, 'The Raising of Lazarus', *Downside Review* 92 (1974), p. 270.

3. Leidig (*Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 223-26) is concerned only with Martha's faith development (11.1, 3, 20-28, 39-45) and sees the four 'Erkenntnisstufen' as fully present in Jesus' conversation with her.

4. At 11.19, 31, 36, 54, and 12.11, the term οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι is used in a neutral sense, different from the hostile way it is used at other points. It is unlikely that the

verses (11.1-16) is taken over by Martha in vv. 17-27. The 'Jews'—initially a neutral group—are the mourners who have come to comfort the sisters in their grief (11.19, 31, 33-37).[1] They are associated with Mary. While a large number of this group comes to faith as a result of the raising of Lazarus, others reject Jesus and side with the Sanhedrin, which plots Jesus' death (11.45-53). The narrative also includes Judas Iscariot, who acts as a foil to Mary (12.3-8).

The story is well-placed in its context within the Fourth Gospel. It belongs most closely with John 9, forming a narrative diptych (see 11.37). The two narratives deal with the twin themes of light and life, first linked together in the Prologue at 1.4 (ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων) and summarised at 5.26-30.[2] Taken together, the two 'signs' express 'the central Christological idea of the fourth gospel, that Jesus is the light and life of the world'.[3] The theme of Jesus as giver of eternal life, which is the main theme of the Gospel, is enlarged in the image of the Good Shepherd (10.1-21) where we find a new perspective on Jesus' life-giving: it entails the voluntary and authoritative surrender of his own life (10.15, 17-18) for the sake of those who are his own (see 10.27-28).[4] Meanwhile, as more and more come to faith in Jesus (10.42), the rejection of those hostile to Jesus escalates. They try first to stone him (10.31) and then seize him (10.39), because of the claim to oneness with the Father in his life and mission (10.29, 32-38). So far in the Gospel he has chosen

term denotes simply 'Judaeans', as argued by U.C. von Wahlde, 'The Johannine 'Jews': a Critical Survey', *NTS* 28 (1982), p. 46, and Brown, I, p. lxxi.

1. That the reference is to mourners is clear both from the language of 11.31 (see esp. the participle παραμυθούμενοι) and from their desire to follow Mary to the tomb in the same verse. The period of mourning was normally seven days (see Sir. 22.12) which explains the official presence of mourners after Lazarus' burial. It is probable that these mourners are predominantly (possibly exclusively) women, despite the masculine substantive οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι which most likely reflects androcentric usage. See E. Jacob, 'Mourning', *IDB*, III, pp. 452-54.

2. So Brown, I, p. 437; Barrett, p. 38; and Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, pp. 81-93. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 365) argues that the raising of Lazarus is in three parts, each fulfilling the prediction at 5.28: those in the tombs (11.17) will hear the voice (11.43) and come out (11.44).

3. Schnackenburg, II, p. 316.

4. Talbert (pp. 164-65) sees 10.1–11.54 as single unit held together by three common themes: Jesus' laying down his life for his own; Jesus' giving them life, and Jesus' gathering together of God's children.

to avoid them. The reader knows, however, that the evasion cannot last and that, in his own way and his own time, Jesus will confront and no longer elude his enemies.[1] It is with this dramatic expectation that the story of the Raising of Lazarus begins.

A. *Structure and Overview*

Most scholars take the narrative as ending either with or soon after the actual raising of Lazarus.[2] I believe, however, that in literary as well as theological terms, the narrative continues into John 12 to include the anointing (12.1-8) and the plot to kill Lazarus (12.9-11).[3] Even allowing for the way in which scenes overlap in John, there seems no reason to end in the middle of the story of the Bethany family. They are not ongoing characters in the Gospel, like the Beloved Disciple or Simon Peter, and therefore we would expect them to be confined to the one story.[4] The structure of the narrative is chiastic, with the danger to Lazarus' life forming the parameters of the narrative (11.1-16; 12.9-11) and his raising to life its centre (11.38-44). The encounter of Jesus with Martha (11.17-27) parallels

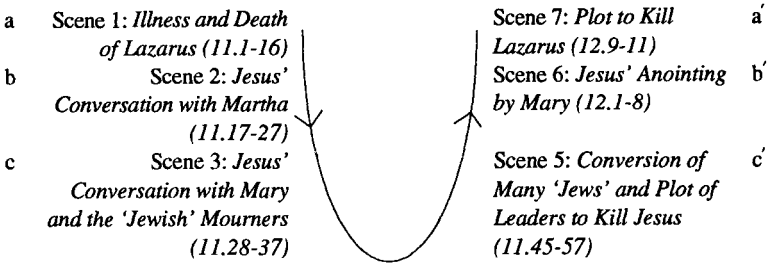
1. E. Schillebeeckx ('This Sickness Does Not Lead to Death [John 11]', in *God Among Us: The Gospel Proclaimed* [London: SCM Press, 1983], p. 69) points out that 10.41 is the last and shortest of the references to John the Baptist in the Gospel. Thus with the Baptist's 'decrease' (3.30), Jesus' 'increase'—that is, his glorification—can now commence.

2. See Brown, I, pp. 422-37; Barrett, p. 387; and Haenchen, II, p. 56, who identify 11.44 as the ending of the Lazarus story. Schnackenburg (II, p. 317) takes it to 11.54, as does Lindars, p. 378; Beasley-Murray, p. 187; and Sanders, p. 262. Bultmann (p. 392) regards 10.40–11.54 as a unit. Morris (pp. 532-70) and Newbigin (pp. 138-48) take it to the end of the chapter; see also W. Wuellner, 'Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and its Reading: The Narrative Rhetoric of John 11 as the Narration of Faith', *Semeia* 53 (1991), pp. 115-20, who sees vv. 54-57 as the last of seven scenes, but also the overture to the narrative of John 12.

3. So J.N. Suggit, 'The Raising of Lazarus', *ExpTim* 95 (1983–84), pp. 106-108, who divides the narrative into two pericopes: the raising of Lazarus (11.1-46) and the anointing at Bethany (12.1-11), with 11.47-53 holding them both together. Ellis, pp. 177-96, regards 10.40–12.11 as a chiastic unit, with 10.40-42 and 12.9-11 as the frame, the two Bethany scenes as parallel (11.1-44, 12.1-8), and 11.45-57 as the centre.

4. The reference to the raising of Lazarus at 12.17-18 serves merely to explain the crowd's enthusiastic welcome of Jesus in the Triumphal Entry (see 12.12).

the anointing at Bethany (12.1-8), and the conversation with Mary and the mourners (11.28-37) parallels the conversion/rejection of the 'Jews' immediately following Lazarus' raising to life (11.45-57):



Using the chiastic framework, the narrative structure can be examined in in detail as follows.

Scenes 1 and 7 (11.1-16; 12.9-11): a and a'

(a) In both scenes the issue is that of Lazarus' imminent or at least threatened death, forming an *inclusio*.[1]

(b) The first scene (11.1-16) is held together by the motif of Lazarus' sickness/sleep/death.[2] ἦν δέ τις ἀσθενῶν (v. 1); ἧς ὁ ἀδελφὸς Δάζαρος ἠσθένει (v. 2); ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ (v. 3); αὕτη ἡ ἀσθενεία οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον (v. 4); ὡς...ἤκουσεν ὅτι ἀσθενεῖ (v. 6); Δάζαρος ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν κεκοίμηται (v. 11); εἰ κεκοίμηται σωθήσεται (v. 12); Δάζαρος ἀπέθανεν (v. 14).[3]

(c) The setting is 11.1-6. The two sisters send a message to Jesus

1. Unlike 9.7, the narrator gives no significance to the etymology of the name 'Lazarus' (לעזר/אלעזר); so J. Kremer, *Lazarus: Die Geschichte einer Auferstehung. Text, Wirkungsgeschichte und Botschaft von Joh 11,1-46* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985), pp. 52-53; also Barrett, p. 389, and Beasley-Murray, p. 183.

2. Rochais (*Les récits de résurrection*, pp. 139-40) identifies a parallel with Job 14.12-15 (LXX) and the imagery of sleep/waking.

3. See Beasley-Murray, p. 187, and J. Ponthot, 'La methode historico-critique en exégèse application à Jean 11', in A.-L. Descamps *et al.* (eds.), *Genèse et structure d'un texte du Nouveau Testament: Étude interdisciplinaire du chapître 11 de l'évangile de Jean* (LD, 104; Paris/Louvain-la-Neuve: Cerf/Cabay, 1981), p. 94.

informing him of the illness of their brother (v. 3).[1] Jesus responds in a cryptic utterance which uses characteristic 'sign'-language (v. 5; see 2.11). Unexpectedly, he does not hurry at once to Bethany but remains where he is for two days (v. 6).

(d) The text speaks rather awkwardly of the anointing as if it has already taken place (ἦν...ἀλείψασα...καὶ ἐκμάξασα...[2]).[3] It functions as a proleptic reference to the anointing which is an important indication that the narrative extends beyond John 11.

(e) Chapter 11.7-16 constitutes a conversation between Jesus and the disciples concerning his journey to Judaea to see Lazarus. It forms a small *inclusio* around the hortatory subjunctive ἄγωμεν (vv. 7, 15, 16). Within this context, Jesus discloses Lazarus' death (vv. 11-14).

(f) Jesus' saying in vv. 9-10 is difficult but appears to be a Johannine parable.[4] He justifies the journey to Judaea, in response to the anxiety of the disciples in v. 8, by speaking of his mission and assuring them of his presence as τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου (see 8.12). The central imagery of light serves to bind the narrative to that of John 9 (especially 9.5).

(g) The idea of life under threat of death is also the theme of the last scene of the narrative (12.9-11): ὃν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν (v. 9), ἵνα καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον ἀποκτείνωσιν (v. 10). Jesus' opponents want to murder Lazarus because of the positive response of

1. Schneiders ('Women', p. 38) points out that in John's Gospel 'women are presented positively and in particularly intimate relationship to Jesus'. Generally they are defined independently of men as in the case of Martha and Mary. Lazarus' identity is dependent on them not vice versa (ἐκ κώμης Μαρίας καὶ Μάρθας τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐτῆς, v. 1; ἧς ὁ ἀδελφὸς Λάζαρος ἠσθένει, v. 2).

2. Assuming the construction to be periphrastic. No such conclusion can be drawn from the aorist participles which indicate aspect rather than tense (the aorist in this case denoting a single action).

3. Brown (I, p. 423) and Henneberry (*Raising of Lazarus*, pp. 73-74) assume it to be parenthesis added by a later editor, but this is unnecessary. Marchadour (*Lazare*, pp. 73-75, 77-79) argues that commentators neglect the rhetorical structures of the narrative; he sees the reference to the anointing in v. 2 as integral to the narrative.

4. So E.M. Sidebottom, *The Christ of the Fourth Gospel* (London: SPCK, 1961), p. 178; Barrett, pp. 391-92; Sanders, p. 266; and Lindars, pp. 389-90. For Dodd (*Historical Tradition*, pp. 373-79) the proverbial saying fits awkwardly in its context; see also Dewey, '*Paroimiai*', pp. 84, 89, 95.

so many of the 'Jews' to Jesus (especially v. 11).[1]

(h) A second common theme between the two framing scenes is that of believing (πιστεύω): καὶ χαίρω δι' ὑμᾶς ἵνα πιστεύσητε (11.15); καὶ ἐπίστευον εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν (12.11). Faith sets the scene for the narrative at the beginning and recapitulates it at the end.

Scenes 2 and 6 (11.17-27; 12.1-8): b and b'

(a) Scenes 2 and 6 parallel each other. They involve the two sisters,who both engage in an intimate encounter with Jesus and express faith in him.[2]

(b) In scene 2 (11.17-27), Martha goes out to meet Jesus on his arrival at Bethany (v. 20) and expresses her disappointment at his absence (v. 21). Lazarus, we are told, is already four days dead (v. 17).[3] In the subsequent dialogue, Jesus reveals to Martha his true identity and his purpose in coming to Bethany (vv. 23-26).

(c) Martha evokes the fifth and greatest of the predicative ἐγώ εἰμι

1. The verb βουλεύομαι can mean either to 'consider' or 'decide'. At 11.53 (where it is followed by the same ἵνα-construction), it refers to the plot of the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus. Whether or not the plot against Lazarus is carried into effect is not made clear in the text. The narrator shows no further interest in Lazarus. To ask questions of the fate of Lazarus, therefore, is to move beyond the text. For a helpful discussion of the historicity of the narrative, see B.J. Byrne, *Lazarus: A Contemporary Reading of John 11.1-46* (Zachaeus Studies: NT; Collegeville: Michael Glazier, Liturgical Press, 1991), pp. 69-83.

2. According to J.R. Jones, *Narrative Structure and Meaning in John 11.1-54* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1982–83), p. 67, Martha is the central character in the body of the story (11.1-54), whereas Mary dominates at the beginning and end. This comment only makes sense where the narrative is extended to include the anointing (12.1-8).

3. See *Gen. Rab.* 100.7 for the rabbinic view that the soul lingered near the body for three days, after which there was no hope of revival; see Brown, I, p. 424; Schnackenburg, II, pp. 328-29; and Beasley-Murray, pp. 189-90. This explains the narrator's insistence on the fourth day (v. 39), which is difficult to reconcile with Jesus' delay. For E. Delebecque, '"Lazare est mort" (note sur Jean 11, 14-15)', *Bib* 67 (1986), p. 91, Lazarus is dead, or almost so, when the message arrives, with four days travel in all for the messenger and Jesus. See also Brown, I, p. 431. Such calculations go beyond the narrative and are unnecessary. It is only after the two-day delay that Jesus informs the disciples of Lazarus' death; in vv. 4 and 6 the implications are that Lazarus is still alive. See Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, p. 231, who argues that the delay has the purpose of 'allowing the illness of the patient to reach a fatal conclusion'.

sayings in the Gospel (vv. 25-26a). She responds to Jesus' self-revelation with a messianic confession which, in the Synoptic Gospels, is placed in the mouth of Peter (see Mk 8.29/pars.).[1]

(d) The parallel scene with Mary (12.1-8) serves an important literary function: it gathers the story of the anointing within the orbit of the Lazarus story (11.2)[2] and brings the narrative to a climax.

(e) Mary anoints Jesus' feet (v. 3) at a dinner given in honour of Lazarus' restoration to life, and in the context of Passover (vv. 1-2). Judas condemns her action (vv. 4-6) and Jesus defends her, pointing to his own imminent departure (vv. 7-8).

Scenes 3 and 5 (11.28-37; 11.45-57): c and c'

(a) In both scenes, Jesus encounters Mary and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, Mary being associated with the 'Jews' at vv. 31 and 45.

(b) Although the initial encounter between Mary and Jesus in scene 3 (vv. 28-37) seems to parallel the meeting between Martha and Jesus (vv. 20-21), in fact the two are very different. In vv. 45-57 the focus moves to Jesus and the 'Jews', while the question of Mary's faith is left in suspense for the time being.

(c) Jesus responds emotionally to the grief of Mary and the mourners (vv. 33, 35) and demands to be taken to the tomb.[3] The 'Jews' are divided in their response to Jesus (vv. 35-36).

(d) As already noted, several commentators include the plot of the 'Jews' against Jesus in scene 5 (vv. 45-57) as the response to the revelation. The plot of the Sanhedrin is essential to this response (vv. 47-53). It is part of the negative reaction to Jesus, paralleled by the believing of many 'Jewish' people (v. 45).[4]

1. So Schneiders, 'Women', p. 41; also Brown, 'Roles of Women', pp. 190-91; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 329-30; and Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 202-204.

2. P. Mourlon-Beernaert ('Parallelisme entre Jean 11 et 12: Étude de structure littéraire et théologique', in A.-L. Deschamps *et al.* [eds.], *Genèse et structure*, pp. 126-44, esp. pp. 132-34) sees a three-stage parallelism between Jn 11 and Jn 12. Although the parallels are somewhat tenuous (based largely on locality), Mourlon-Beernaert is at least attempting to see the anointing in 12.1-8 in relation to Jn 11.

3. On the significance of Jesus' emotions here and at v. 38, see below, pp. 208-12.

4. For Culpepper ('Jews', p. 280) the most distinctive feature of the 'Jews' in the Gospel is the division between them; hostility towards Jesus is by no means

(e) The attitude of the authorities undergoes a change in the Gospel. No longer do they indulge in angry, spontaneous attempts to stone Jesus. They now plan to put him to death (v. 53).

(f) Scene 5 includes Jesus' withdrawal to Ephraim (v. 54) and the setting up of the plot in Jerusalem by 'the chief priests and Pharisees' (vv. 55-57) just before Passover. Here the narrative emphasises that, with the plot in place, Jesus' enemies await only the opportunity to actualise it. A warrant for his arrest has been issued (v. 57).

(g) Jesus does not yet move to Jerusalem, however. He has still unfinished business with the Bethany family. When he does enter Jerusalem, it will be in his own time and at his own initiative. Ironically this will happen not in secret (see 7.10) but openly and in triumph (12.12-19).

Scene 4 (11.38-44): d

(a) That the structure is chiastic and not just concentric is seen in the way the central scene (vv. 38-44), like the two frames of the narrative (scenes 1 and 7), focuses on Lazarus. Rather than the pattern of life leading to (the threat of) death, as in the frames, the central scene is reversed: Lazarus now experiences the movement from death to life.

(b) Jesus approaches the tomb with great emotion (v. 38). Martha objects to the opening of the tomb (v. 39b) and is re-assured by Jesus (v. 40). Her objection and Jesus' response are framed by reference to the removal of the stone (ἄρατε τὸν λίθον, v. 39a; ἦραν τὸν λίθον, v. 41a).

(c) The fact that Jesus never says the words of v. 40 to Martha is not, for the evangelist, problematical. The nearest equivalent is Jesus' words to the disciples in v. 4, with a possible allusion to v. 15 and Jesus' question to Martha in v. 26b. The evangelist, as we have seen before (see 6.31, 41), rarely quotes verbatim.[1]

(d) At the heart of the scene is the prayer of Jesus (vv. 41b-42), a prayer of thanksgiving and not intercessory. Its function is to point the onlookers to the revelation of Jesus as God's emissary.

(e) The raising of Lazarus is narrated with dramatic power, structured around three commands: ἄρατε τὸν λίθον, v. 39; Λάζαρε,

uniform. This division is reflected in the narrative here. See above, Chapter 4, pp. 99-100.

1. So Kremer, *Lazarus*, pp. 75-76.

δεῦρο ἔξω, v. 43; and ἄφετε αὐτὸν ὑπάγειν, v. 44b.[1] Jesus addresses the first and third commands to the 'Jews', drawing them as witnesses into the drama of the 'sign'.[2] Lazarus emerges from the tomb and is set free (v. 44).

(f) The purpose of the narrative as a whole is reiterated in the verb πιστεύω (see 11.15, 12.11) which emphasises the importance of faith (ἐὰν πιστεύσῃς, v. 40; ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν, v. 42).

B. *John 11.1–12.11 as Symbolic Narrative*

The important question in this discussion is in what sense Jn 11.1–12.11 functions as a symbolic narrative. The issue—like the narrative itself—is a complex one. The raising of Lazarus is like and unlike the narratives we have examined so far.[3] We have seen that these have a distinctive literary pattern: a 'sign' or image at the beginning (Stage 1) lays the groundwork for the narrative that follows, which becomes a symbol of eschatological life (Stages 2 to 5). There seem to be problems, however, with this categorisation of 11.1–12.11. The basic 'sign', the raising of Lazarus, occurs not at the beginning but in the centre of the chiasm. The struggle of Martha and her confession of faith (v. 27) take place not after the 'sign', as we would expect, but before. These points of difference suggest that we are dealing with a different phenomenon here. How do we explain deviations from the pattern we have so far observed?

1. Suggitt ('Lazarus', p. 107) sees Lazarus' obedience to Jesus' command in his emergence from the tomb as an indication of discipleship (see 5.25; 10.3-5, 16, 27-28). While this is true, the narrator is not primarily concerned with the development of Lazarus' faith.

2. Some, following Basil, interpret Lazarus' ability to walk unaided out of the tomb as a 'minor miracle'; see Bultmann, p. 409; Marsh, p. 437; and Hoskyns, p. 407. Beasley-Murray (p. 195) rightly finds such an interpretation absurd; see also Sanders, p. 276, and Carson, pp. 418-19.

3. See Kremer, *Lazarus*, pp. 28-50, for a discussion in form critical terms of the *Gattung* of Jn 11.1-46 which he compares with OT narratives of the raising of the dead (1 Kgs 17.17-24; 2 Kgs 4.18-37), and also NT stories (Lk. 7.11-17; Mk 5.21-43; Acts 9.36-42, 20.7-12). For him, the raising of Lazarus belongs to biblical '"Totenwechungsgeschichten"' (p. 50). Nevertheless there are major differences from other biblical narratives and Kremer concludes that John 11 belongs primarily with other Johannine miracle stories in which each 'ist...eine symbolhafte Handlung, die auf das durch Christus geschenkte volle Leben verweist' (p. 49).

To answer the question we need to distinguish between the Lazarus story as climax to Jesus' public ministry and the Lazarus story as initiator of the Passion narrative. This dual role, perhaps more than anything else, explains the oddities of the narrative. The story of the Passion begins to intrude, in what seems a disruptive way, into the narrative about Lazarus. What was Lazarus' story now becomes Jesus' own story.[1] While allusions to the Passion are by no means absent from other symbolic narratives (see 3.14, 5.18, 6.51), they are not nearly as prominent as here. While the other narratives focus on Jesus as the one who is 'from God', the Lazarus story is directed at Jesus as the one who returns to God through the cross. In 11.1–12.11 we find a shift in emphasis taking place, therefore, from the *origins* to the *destiny* of Jesus.[2]

In the event, the two narrative threads—that of Jesus and that of Lazarus—become interwoven through the story. This congruence does not take place, however, in equal proportions. In the first half of the narrative, the focus is mainly on Lazarus, while in the second half the story of Jesus predominates. The chiastic structure emphasises the point: scenes 1 to 3 have as their main focus the Lazarus story, while scenes 5 to 7 are concerned more with the Passion of Jesus. The bridge between the two is the actual raising of Lazarus (scene 4). It is the Passion narrative which gives rise to the peculiar literary features of the Lazarus story. On a deeper level we will find that, far from being an intrusion into the Lazarus story, it becomes the symbolic heart of the narrative. This is unfolded through the five Stages, reaching a climax in the story of Mary's anointing.

Scene 1: Illness and Death of Lazarus—Stages 1 to 2 (11.1-16)

Stage 1 occurs in the first scene of the narrative (11.1-16). Although the central 'sign' does not take place in the first scene, the σημεῖον is established through the opening scene, but in an unusual way. Jesus' previous ministry, and in particular the 'signs' witnessed so far, raises the expectation that Lazarus will be healed in response to the appeal of the women, making a fourth healing in the Gospel. The healing of Lazarus, we assume, will be the foundational 'sign' of the narrative.

1. According to McNeil, 'Lazarus', p. 270, who stresses the point, 'John 11 sounds loud warning-bells of Jesus' approaching end'.

2. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 367) attributes this shift to the Good Shepherd discourse in John 10, which sets the pattern for Jn 11.

The expectation is sharpened with the description of Mary in v. 2 and her brother Lazarus in v. 3 (ἴδε ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ). None of the characters in the other symbolic narratives has been so intimately linked to Jesus as the family at Bethany, none so clearly to be understood as a disciple.[1] All three belong among the sheep who know the voice of the Good Shepherd, who appeal to him in their need and follow him as disciples (10.27). Not only the love that exists between the family and Jesus (v. 5), but also Jesus' words at 11.4 encourage us to assume that he will heal Lazarus. Everything in the narrative is set up for a healing story.

These expectations begin to break down in v. 6. In the first place, instead of hurrying to the scene, Jesus remains where he is for two days (v. 6). The action—puzzling in the light of Jesus' affection for the family (v. 5)[2]—conforms to a similar pattern established at 2.3-4 and 7.3-9: Jesus' actions are self-determined rather than at the initiative of others.[3] More immediately, Jesus' delay suggests the real nature of the σημεῖον, a suggestion that is strengthened by Jesus' blunt disclosure that Lazarus has died (v. 14). But already we know, from the 'sign'-language of v. 4, that a miraculous event is about to take place. Lazarus' death is not πρὸς θάνατον but ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δοξάσθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ δι' αὐτῆς.[4] Later in the Gospel the cognates δόξα and δοξάζω point to the glorification of Jesus through death and resurrection (e.g. 13.31, 17.1).[5] The language

1. Disciples are called φίλοι at 15.14-15 (as against δοῦλοι). On the significance of this, see Schneiders, 'Foot Washing', pp. 140-43.

2. Haenchen, II, p. 57, commenting on the lack of compassion in Jesus' delay (v. 6), argues that this is why John needs to reassure his reader of Jesus' love for the family in v. 5.

3. See Barrett, p. 391, and Talbert, pp. 171-72. C.H. Giblin, 'Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St. John's Portrayal of Jesus (John 2.1-11; 4.46-54; 7.2-14; 11.1-44)', *NTS* 26 (1980), pp. 208-10, relates this motif to a Johannine pattern in which Jesus responds positively after a negative reaction (i.e. *suggestion*, vv. 3-4; *negative reply*, vv. 4 and 6; and *positive action* in three stages, vv. 7-44).

4. Jones (*Narrative Structure*, p. 204) points out that for the evangelist death and glory are not opposites (as the disciples assume): 'the two projections stand on different planes'.

5. See G.B. Caird, 'The Glory of God in the Fourth Gospel', *NTS* 15 (1969), p. 272. According to Kremer, *Lazarus*, pp. 56-58, glory and glorification refer particularly to God's power over (eternal) death.

of v. 4 is the first hint of the real nature of the σημεῖον.

The establishing of the 'sign' is made explicit in vv. 11-15. Jesus' intention to 'wake' Lazarus (v. 11) out of the 'sleep' of death (v. 14),[1] along with the reference to his joy (v. 15), makes it clear that the 'sign' is to be the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The disciples' incomprehension in v. 12 is not a classical example of Johannine misunderstanding, since, as Bultmann points out, 'it has nothing to do with the confusion of the heavenly and the earthly'.[2] It relates rather to the overturning of expectations in scene 1 which disorientates the disciples (as it does the reader). One of the features of this narrative is that, with the actual 'sign' delayed until scene 4, the establishing of the 'sign' is a more difficult matter for the characters of the drama to grasp. Nevertheless, although the σημεῖον has not yet taken place, it is strongly implied in the opening scene. In this sense, the basic 'sign' is established (Stage 1) before it happens.

At the same time, Stage 2 is also present in this scene, overlapping with Stage 1. The disciples misunderstand the symbolic meaning of Jesus' intended journey to Bethany (vv. 8, 16). They do not understand that, on a deeper level, Jesus is to give life to Lazarus through his death. Their misunderstanding is apparent in the concentric intertwining of Lazarus' story and that of Jesus in vv. 7-16: Jesus' journey (vv. 7-10), Lazarus' death (vv. 11-15a), Jesus' journey (v15b-16). The structure of these verses points to life rather than death. Through the metaphor of light in v. 9,[3] Jesus reveals that in going to Judaea he is walking not into darkness but in the light. For this reason, the disciples also need not be afraid, because in travelling with Jesus, they are walking by the light of the sun.[4] Moreover the verb χαίρω in

1. Jones (*Narrative Structure*, p. 281) comments that the advantage of the metaphor of sleep is its suggestion of reversibility (awakening). The NT often uses 'sleep' metaphorically for the death of believers (e.g. 1 Cor. 11.30, 15.18); see Hoskyns, p. 401.

2. Bultmann, p. 399. Against this, cf. Brown, I, p. 423 and Jones, *Narrative Structure*, pp. 172-73.

3. That the saying is metaphorical is made clear in v. 10 where τὸ φῶς describes an internal illumination rather than the light of the sun (v. 9); so Schnackenburg, II, p. 325.

4. See Brown, I, p. 423; Gnilka, p. 89; and Henneberry, *Raising of Lazarus*, p. 96. Cf. T.E. Pollard, 'The Raising of Lazarus (John xi)', in E.A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Evangelica. VI. Papers Presented to the Fourth International Congress on New Testament Studies* (TU zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, 112;

v. 15 points to an emotion which belongs not to death but to life.[1] The disciples fail to understand that, like his absence in v. 6,[2] Jesus' journey to Lazarus is symbolic. It points to the giving of life through his glorification on the cross. They misunderstand the symbolic meaning of the 'sign' which is soon to take place.

Scene 2: Conversation with Martha—Stages 2 to 3 (11.17-27)

Stage 2 continues in scene 2 in Jesus' conversation with Martha (vv. 17-27). At this point Martha stands in the same relation to Jesus as the disciples of the first scene: she misunderstands the coming of Jesus to Bethany. Her opening words (v. 21) indicate her assumption that he has come to comfort her. By meeting him alone, Martha, like the other disciples (vv. 8, 16), shows her awareness of the danger of Jesus' presence in Judaea, a point confirmed in scene 3 where she summons Mary λάθρα (v. 28).[3] Her main concern here, however, is with her own situation. Verses 20-21 express not only eagerness to see him but also grief and disappointment. In spite of being a disciple of Jesus (v. 5),[4] Martha reveals a fundamental misunderstanding.

Martha's opening words reveal the level of her faith. At this point, the narrative moves to Stage 3. Here we find, characteristically, both understanding and misunderstanding. In v. 21 she reproaches Jesus

Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1973), pp. 437-38, who argues that light has no christological overtones here. He interprets these verses and the two-day delay as Jesus waiting for the 'light' of divine guidance.

1. According to Delebecque ('"Lazare est mort"', pp. 95-97) in his helpful analysis of vv. 14-15, the aorist ἀπέθανεν is followed by two clauses in v. 15 which are dependent on it: a final clause (ἵνα πιστεύσητε) and a causal clause (ὅτι οὐκ ἤμην ἐκεῖ).The meaning is thus 'Lazarus has died *in order that* you may believe and *because* I was not there'. The remaining clause, καὶ χαίρω δι' ὑμᾶς, ought, in his view, to be set in parenthesis: 'ce sont les disciples... qui causent la joie de Jésus, et seul Jésus peut dire qu'il ressent cette joie' (p. 93).

2. See Kremer's comment on the paradox involved in Jesus' absence from Lazarus' sickbed (*Lazarus*, p. 62): 'Der Nichtanwesenheit bei dem Erkrankten wird eine Anwesenheit bei dem Verstorbenen gegenüber-gestellt'.

3. So Calvin, p. 20, who accounts for Martha's secrecy on the grounds that 'His danger was fresh in her mind; the rage of His enemies... [as far as Martha was concerned] might break out again more violently when they heard of His arrival'. Against this, cf. Henneberry, *Raising of Lazarus*, pp. 146-47.

4. According to Schneiders ('Women', p. 41) Martha is 'the representative of the community left behind which must face the challenge to its faith in Jesus as the Life'. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 329.

for his delay and seems to suggest in the following verse ([ἀλλά] καὶ νῦν οἶδα[1]) the hope that Jesus will raise her brother from the dead. However, this interpretation of v. 22 contradicts her later responses (vv. 24, 39), not to mention the reproach of v. 21. Nevertheless, none of this denies some reality to Martha's hope. The ambiguity and vagueness of her statement, in Schnackenburg's words, 'indicates a hope and expresses a request which leaves all possibilities open'.[2] Martha expresses both regret for the past (v. 21) and yet hope for the future (v. 22), all of which (including the contradiction) is part of her struggle to understand. Martha's faith is real but still to be developed. Thus she functions in this scene as the spokesperson for the disciples,[3] sharing in and also moving beyond their misunderstanding. She begins the movement from the literal to the symbolic.

Verses 23-24 contain the same tensive dynamic between understanding and misunderstanding as Martha's faith develops. Jesus explicates the meaning of his journey to Judaea by proclaiming the certainty of Lazarus' rising from the dead (v. 23). Martha at once catches the words of reassurance, affirming them within her own context. The addition of the words ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ shows, however, that she has not yet understood Jesus' meaning. She has interpreted his words in terms of a future eschatology without reference to his presence in Bethany. Although she now begins to think of her brother's death on a theological level, she does not yet understand the eschatological or christological significance of Jesus' journey. She is like the Samaritan woman at 4.19-20, who has begun to think in theological terms, and at 4.25 in messianic terms, but whose eschatology is future-oriented.

1. The verse might seem easier to interpret if the ἀλλά were an interpolation. Of the major readings, it is omitted in B ℵ* and $\mathfrak{P}^{75}$ and included in $\mathfrak{P}^{45,66}$ and ℵ^{2}; this suggests a weighting towards its omission. On the other hand its insertion as a scribal gloss is inexplicable. It is easier to explain the omission if, as is likely, early scribes perceived the same problem with Martha's response.

2. Schnackenburg, II, p. 329; see also Lindars, p. 394; Gnilka, p. 91; and Lightfoot, p. 221. According to Marsh, p. 427, Martha sees 'a ray of impossible hope'; also Barrett, p. 395, who argues that Martha 'implies that if Jesus asks God for the life of his friend it will be granted'. For Bultmann (p. 401) Martha's statement is 'an indirect request to raise her brother... formulated not as a request but as a confession'. These commentators acknowledge the reality of Martha's faith, yet recognise its tentative nature.

3. So S.M. Schneiders, 'Death in the Community of Eternal Life: History, Theology and Spirituality in John 11', *Int* 41 (1987), p. 51.

Martha's struggle is to understand the meaning of Jesus' advent existentially, as it relates to the fundamental question of life and death.

Thus although Martha's faith is developing, it is still not full Johannine faith. On the basis of other symbolic narratives, Martha's belief in the resurrection of her brother (v. 24) alerts us to the fact that a Jewish (rabbinic) belief, such as the future resurrection of the dead,[1] will not necessarily take her very far. On the contrary, unless it can make the leap into Johannine christology, where Judaism is interpreted symbolically of Jesus, it finally ends up on the side of unbelief. For the evangelist, Martha's conventional piety is no necessary guarantee of a symbolic understanding. Her openness in the dialogue with Jesus, however, points to a maturing understanding. This is confirmed in the following verses where she elicits Jesus' climactic self-revelation.

In the next two verses, Jesus clarifies the meaning even further in the ἐγώ εἰμι saying which is the theological core of the narrative, and follows it with an invitation to faith (see 6.35, 8.12): ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή. ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ κἂν ἀποθάνῃ ζήσεται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ζῶν καὶ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (vv. 25-26). Jesus moves beyond the immediate situation of Lazarus and reveals to Martha his universal role as the giver of eternal life.[2] The life that he offers clearly goes beyond mortal limits: it is not just ἡ ζωή but ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή (v. 25).[3] What is not so clear is the precise meaning of life and death in these verses. Are they to be understood in a physical or spiritual sense? It is probable that both senses are present. Verse 25b (ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ) explains the meaning of ἡ ἀνάστασις and refers to eternal life (ζήσεται) which continues beyond the boundaries of physical death (κἂν

1. See Barrett, p. 395; Brown, I, p. 434; and Gnilka, p. 91. On a secondary level, the notion of a polemic against christians outside the Johannine community cannot be ruled out.

2. Suggitt ('Lazarus', pp. 107-108) sees Lazarus as a type of the christian believer throughout the narrative. However, he says nothing of the central role played by Martha and Mary as types of christian faith. From a literary perspective, the prominence of the two women invites the reader to identify more closely with their experience than that of their brother. See above, p. 189.

3. While καὶ ἡ ζωή is omitted in what appears to be the reading of $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ and several other authorities, it is present in the majority of MSS (e.g. ℵ B $\mathfrak{P}^{66,75}$ and others). There is insufficent evidence to doubt its authenticity.

ἀποθάνῃ).[1] Similarly, v. 26 (καὶ πᾶς ὁ ζῶν...) is an expansion of ἡ ζωή and again refers to eternal life, this time in the context of eternal death (οὐ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).[2] The point is that, for those who believe, death in an eternal sense can have no power over them:

> The believer who dies will live; the living believer will never die... In both cases the life in question is eternal life... which does not yield to either physical death, however real, or the 'death forever' which cannot touch the believer.[3]

In this sense, the ἐγώ εἰμι utterance locates resurrection within the present and in the person of Jesus who 'vermag...jetzt schon das zu bewirken was nach dem Glauben Israels einzig Jahwe zusteht...und erst für die Zukunft erwartet wird'.[4] For the evangelist, the raising of Lazarus is meaningful as a symbol pointing to Jesus as resurrection and life within the present. It is an event belonging to σάρξ and symbolises Jesus' gift of eschatological life. However, although the central utterance of the narrative is found in vv. 25-26, these verses do not as yet disclose the full symbolic meaning. The inner meaning is revealed only as the focus moves to Jesus' own story: Jesus' experience of dying and living, living and not dying. It is the basis on which Jesus is able to communicate life to believers. Only through Jesus'

1. The interpretation advanced here is an example of 'synthetic parallelism', in which the second part of the couplet advances the first. See Henneberry, *Raising of Lazarus*, pp. 138-41; Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 365; Brown, I, p. 434; and Beasley-Murray, pp. 190-91. The phrase πιστεύων εἰς ἐμέ is parallel to and therefore synonymous with πᾶς ὁ ζῶν. The other view is of a 'synonymous parallelism' in which the two lines are seen as saying the same thing; see Barrett, p. 396, and Schnackenburg, II, p. 331. The phrase πᾶς ὁ ζῶν seems unnecessary if it refers only to physical life. It makes more sense to see it in relation to ἡ ζωή in v. 25 where it picks up the parallel between faith and life in Jesus.

2. Against this, Bultmann (p. 403) understands death in an existential, rather than 'eternal' sense. Barrett (p. 396) agrees with Bultmann here on the basis of other examples of οὐ μή with the aorist subjunctive ('shall never die', v. 26) in the Fourth Gospel: 4.14, 8.51-52, 10.28, 13.8. However, none of these examples refers to death (except perhaps 10.28). Bultmann's interpretation seems to ignore the pains the narrator takes to stress the reality of Lazarus' death. On this, see J.P. Martin, 'History and Eschatology in the Lazarus Narrative. John 1-44', *SJT* 17 (1964), pp. 334, 337, 339, and Schneiders, 'Death', p. 56. See also Neyrey, *Ideology of Revolt*, pp. 82-87.

3. Schneiders, 'Death', p. 52.

4. Kremer, *Lazarus*, p. 67.

own journey from death to life can he claim to be ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή for believers.

Martha's Confession (v. 27). Jesus' challenge to faith in v. 26b leads directly to Martha's reply in v. 27. Martha responds in positive terms to Jesus' revelation, moving forward significantly in her understanding. Has the narrative at this point reached Stage 4 in Martha's confession or is there a degree of misunderstanding still present? The answer depends partly on how the titles in v. 27 are interpreted and partly on how we interpret Martha's objection to the opening of the tomb at v. 39. According to Schneiders, her faith has reached full understanding: 'Martha's response is the most fully developed confession of Johannine faith in the Fourth Gospel...Martha's belief in Jesus' word is her entrance into eternal life.'[1] In this view the titles Martha uses in v. 27 are, in the evangelist's context, 'freighted with divinity',[2] while her reaction to the opening of the tomb is due not to lack of faith but because she 'who knows that Lazarus, even though he has died yet lives, has no reason to think the final resurrection will be anticipated in his case'.[3] Furthermore, Martha's confession is similar to the confession that the evangelist invites the reader to make at 20.31.[4]

There are problems, however, with this view. In the first place, the titles themselves do not necessarily indicate full understanding. While the quasi-title ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος echoes the Prologue (ἦν

1. Schneiders, 'Death', p. 53; see also Bultmann, p. 404. For Leidig, *Jesu Gespräch*, pp. 223-24, v. 27 represents the third step of the 'Erkenntisstufen', while her summoning of Mary (vv. 28-29) is her commissioning as a disciple, which is the final step. More helpfully, Schnackenburg (II, p. 332) argues that, while Martha may not understand everything, her faith is nevertheless held up to readers of the Gospel as exemplary; see also Lindars, p. 396, and Rochais, *Les récits de résurrection*, pp. 143-44.

2. Schneiders, 'Death', p. 53.

3. Schneiders, 'Death', p. 54. See Brown, I, p. 525-32, who argues that the highest order of faith is that which has no need of 'signs'. However, for the evangelist, it is not a question of whether 'signs' are necessary but whether, like the Johannine images, they are interpreted aright. In the Fourth Gospel, as we have seen, there are really only two levels of faith: rejection of Jesus' teaching and ministry or acceptance of them in their christological signification (see 1.11-13).

4. So McNeil, 'Lazarus', p. 273, and Gnilka, p. 92.

τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν... ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, 1.9),[1] it also has similarities with the words of the crowd in John 6 and their limited understanding (ὁ προφήτης ὁ ἐρχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον, 6.14). The title ὁ Χριστός is used by the Samaritan woman at 4.29 as part of the journey to faith, but is not yet the full confession of faith made by the villagers (4.42). The third title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, used by Nathanael at 1.49, expresses a faith which is real but limited to the context of Israel (see also βασιλεύς... τοῦ Ἰσραήλ in the same verse).[2] Thus, while the three titles signify a maturing faith, the precise meaning which Martha attaches to them is ambiguous. They cannot be said to imply full faith.

Secondly, the proposition that Martha's confession is the climax of faith in the narrative fails to do justice to scene 4.[3] It ignores not only Martha's objection in v. 39 but also Jesus' reproach in v. 40. Moreover, as we shall see, there is also a hint in the scene that follows of a lack of understanding on Martha's part. The only legitimate conclusion we can make is that, while Martha's confession and the titles she uses demonstrate a growth in faith as a result of the revelation, the narrator leaves open the question of the extent of that faith.[4] We do not yet know the full reality of Martha's faith. Indeed we cannot know until the 'sign' itself takes place. For the moment the narrative remains within Stage 3.

Scene 3: Meeting with Mary and 'Jews'—Stage 3 cont. (11.28-37)

At first it seems that Mary will engage in dialogue with Jesus in scene 3 (vv. 28-37) along the same lines as his dialogue with Martha

1. According to Kremer, *Lazarus*, p. 70, 'dieses Kommen des Gottessohnes in die Welt findet in Jesu Kommen nach Betanien... seinen konkreten Ausdruck'.

2. On the three titles, see Byrne, *Lazarus*, pp. 53-54.

3. On the inadequacy of Martha's faith here, see Hoskyns, p. 402; Brown, I, pp. 434-35 (who draws a parallel with the Samaritan woman at 4.19); and Moloney, *Son of Man*, p. 210. For Lightfoot (p. 222) the absence of prostration on Martha's part suggests a faith that is less than perfect. Byrne (*Lazarus*, p. 54) comments: 'If Martha's faith is perfect at this point, the actual sign (raising) becomes, at least for her, superfluous. If she has still some way to go in her journey of faith, then the sign is not an anticlimax but something which reveals the glory of God.'

4. According to Brown (I, p. 434) Jesus 'does not reject her [Martha's] traditional titles, but he will demonstrate the deeper truth that lies behind them'; Hoskyns (p. 402) regards Martha's use of the titles as formally correct but somewhat lacking in understanding of their meaning.

(v. 32). However, the presence of the grieving 'Jews' thwarts any attempt at intimate conversation and pushes the narrative in a different direction. The mourners are an important character grouping. They provide Mary with support and companionship in her grief, and so they naturally assume that when she leaves the house she intends to visit the tomb and weep there. As readers with the superior knowledge of v. 28, however, we know that she has gone to join Martha and Jesus. Because of the faithful presence of the mourners, Mary is unable to talk with Jesus alone, with important consequences for the narrative. The central role that the reader knows she is to play (see v. 2), along with the raising of Lazarus itself, are both delayed.

The entry of the 'Jews' not only delays dramatically the climax but also draws them as witnesses into the event of Lazarus' raising to life. It confronts them also with the summons to faith which the miracle implies. Here the motif of danger again becomes apparent. As we have noted, Martha is at pains to keep Jesus outside the village (see λάθρα, v. 28). The arrival of the mourners with Mary, in spite of Martha's efforts, raises awareness in the reader of the threat posed to Jesus by οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (see 10.31; 11.8, 16). The hint of danger suggests also that Martha has not yet fully grasped the implications of Jesus' revelation. After all, Jesus' journey is to Judaea and not just Bethany (v. 7). He travels, not only into the private world of the sisters' grief, but also into the public arena where the events of his Passion will take place. Martha, it would seem, does not yet understand the symbolic meaning of Jesus' journey to Judaea.

Although in scene 3 attention shifts from Mary to the 'Jews', there are aspects of Mary's story that are important for the narrative. On the one hand v. 32b seems to betray the same level of misunderstanding on Mary's part as we saw with Martha (v. 21): εἰ ἦς ὧδε οὐκ ἄν μου ἀπέθανεν ὁ ἀδελφός (v. 32b). On the other hand it is prefixed by a reference to Mary falling at Jesus' feet (ἔπεσεν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς πόδας, v. 32a), which is itself an indication of faith.[1] Mary's

1. Schnackenburg (II, p. 333) describes Mary as 'nothing but a complaining woman'; similarly Pollard ('Raising of Lazarus', p. 440) sees a contrast between Martha's faith and Mary's 'hysterical weeping' which indicates lack of faith. Beasley-Murray (p. 192) rightly objects to such characterisation. Mary's statement shows 'faith in the Lord's power to heal, but grief clouds her vision, and the arrival of the "consolers" prevents further conversation'. Bultmann (p. 405) makes a similar point in defence of Mary.

response to Jesus in v. 32 is, in other words, both a gesture of faith (understanding) and an expression of disappointment (misunderstanding).[1] It echoes the proleptic reference to the anointing in 11.2 and its fulfilment at 12.3, drawing a subtle contrast between Mary's limited understanding here and her full understanding articulated in the anointing. It is a hint to the reader that Mary will fall at Jesus' feet in quite a different way by the end of the narrative (12.3). All this indicates that the narrative is still within the orbit of Stage 3.

Significance of Jesus' Emotions (vv. 33, 35; also v. 38)

Mary's expression of grief and disappointment at the absence of Jesus leads to an outburst of weeping among her (probably female[2]) companions. Jesus' response to their tears in the verses that follow (vv. 33-35; see also v. 38) has given rise to a controversial number of interpretations. Before raising the question of the meaning of Jesus' emotions, however, we need to examine their narrative context. His emotions are a response to the tears of Mary and the mourners, tears which on one level are highly appropriate but which also spring from a misreading of the presence of Jesus.[3] It indicates once again misunderstanding since the coming of Jesus brings the women not joy as he intends (see v. 15), but renewed grief. This response signifies a failure on the part of Mary and her companions to understand the symbolic meaning of Jesus' journey to Judaea.

The misunderstanding is made more poignant by the manner in which, at Jesus' request (v. 34), they begin to move towards the tomb, all of them including Jesus himself (v. 35) overwhelmed with emotion. The mourners at once assume that Jesus is sharing their grief at the death of Lazarus (v. 36). Their response betrays both understanding and misunderstanding. Jesus' presence is indeed motivated by

1. Schillebeeckx ('This Sickness', p. 71) sees Mary's gesture as an expression of superior faith to Martha's: unlike her sister Mary does not need 'all this catechesis'. Such a view ignores the literary indications that link Mary with οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (11.33, p. 45). It ignores also the development in faith between her first and second encounters with Jesus (12.1-8).

2. See above, p. 190.

3. Lindars (p. 397) points to the similarity with the tears of Mary Magdelene at 20.11, which likewise mistake the presence of Jesus (see 20.17a). Talbert (pp. 174-75) drawing on Seneca, makes a distinction between tears which express sorrow (Jesus' tears) and those which imply despair and lack of faith (Mary and the mourners); see also Carson, p. 416.

love of Lazarus (vv. 3, 5),[1] but it is not a past event as the 'Jews' assume (ἐφιλεῖ). Moreover Jesus' knowledge of his friend's death in vv. 14-15 aroused in him not grief but joy (χαίρω). The same is true of the expression of regret/reproach uttered by some of the mourners in v. 37. On one level what they say is true. Despite his reluctance to act in response to human initiative, Jesus could have 'done something' (ποιῆσαι), as he did with the man born blind (9.6-7) and with the royal official's son (the latter at a distance, 4.50[2]). But, as we know, he has chosen not to because he sees the death of Lazarus as revealing the divine glory (v. 4).

The misunderstanding of the mourners makes it clear, therefore, that we cannot simply interpret Jesus' emotions as grief. How then are we to understand Jesus' emotional reaction and how does it serve to advance the narrative? In the first place, it is undeniable that the phrase ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι (v. 33) and its repetition in participial form (ἐμβριμώμενος, v. 38) has some reference to anger.[3] As Schnackenburg argues, 'any attempt to reinterpret it in terms of an internal emotional upset caused by grief, pain, or sympathy is illegitimate'.[4] Secondly, there are also other emotions

1. See Lightfoot, p. 223: 'the reader perceives that they [the 'Jews'] are giving unconscious testimony to a far greater proof of the Lord's affection, which is about to be shown in His bestowal on Lazarus of life; the Lord is laying down His life for His friend'; see also Barrett, p. 400.

2. So Lightfoot, p. 219.

3. The point is agreed on by a large number of commentators: e.g. Barrett, p. 399; Schnackenburg, II, p. 335; Bernard, II, p. 392; Hoskyns, p. 404, Lightfoot, p. 229; and Marsh, p. 433; see also Carson, p. 415, who translates the phrase in v. 33 as '"he was outraged in spirit, and troubled"'. The verb ἐμβριμάομαι in Classical Greek refers to the angry snorting of horses and comes later to be used of human anger; see LSJ, p. 540; MM, p. 206; and BAGD, p. 252; see also Mk 1.43. Against this, cf. B. Lindars, 'Rebuking the Spirit. A New Analysis of the Lazarus Story of John 11', *NTS* 38 (1992), pp. 89-104, esp. pp. 101-104, who argues that, whereas John's source referred to Jesus' anger (exorcising a demon), the evangelist's redactional activity has moved the emphasis to grief. C. Story ('The Mental Attitude of Jesus at Bethany: John 11.33, 38', *NTS* 37 [1991], pp. 51-66) is not convincing in arguing that Jesus is rebuking himself for not coming earlier to the tomb. The alternative reading ἐταράχθη τῷ πνεύματι ὡς ἐμβριμούμενος is interesting not because it is likely to be authentic (𝔓[45vid.], [66c] D), but because it illustrates the difficulties faced by early scribes in interpreting Jesus' anger.

4. Schnackenburg, II, p. 335. He warns against psychologising Jesus' emotions or giving way to dogmatic, christological interests (pp. 334-35).

present, as indicated by the verbs ταράσσω (v. 33) and δακρύω (v. 35), which cannot easily be explained, even by the death of Lazarus. The language of these verbs signifies an intense level of distress.[1]

Various explanations have been offered for Jesus' anger and distress. Of these the most common is that Jesus is angry at the lack of faith evinced by the mourners.[2] Such an explanation seems unlikely in the immediate context, though it may well relate to the scene that follows the raising of Lazarus. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus only ever gives vent to expressions of anger when confronted with the 'Jews' in the most negative sense, who deliberately and wilfully reject him. With those who struggle to understand (such as the Samaritan woman) Jesus acts in a very different way. Even when challenging them, he draws them slowly and patiently towards the revelation. But for the evangelist, as we saw in the narrative of John 9, sin means the rejection of Jesus as God's emissary and the giver of life (9.41). Such rejection is present in the narrative, not here in scene 3, but in scene 5 where members of the Sanhedrin plot to kill Jesus (vv. 45-57). Moreover the addition of the words ἐν πνεύματι and ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν shows that Jesus' anger here is internal 'und nicht äußerlich gegen andere gerichtete'.[3]

A second possibility is that Jesus' anger is directed against the work of Satan, or at least the forces of death and their destructive effects on human life.[4] Against this is the obvious objection that nowhere in the Fourth Gospel does Jesus evince such a reaction to death or Satan. A third possibility is that Jesus is sympathising with the grief of those who mourn.[5] The problem here, as we have noted, is that it seems to contradict Jesus' earlier expression of joy at the consequences of Lazarus' death (v. 15). Jesus expresses no sympathy at the illness and death of his friend Lazarus in the first scene, where we would

1. Bernard (II, p. 393) speaks of 'a tremendous spiritual agitation and effort'. See also Hoskyns, p. 403, who points out how carefully Jesus' intense emotion is described.

2. E.g. Schnackenburg, II, p. 336-37; Bultmann, p. 406; Hoskyns, pp. 404-405; and Lightfoot, p. 229; also Henneberry, *Raising of Lazarus*, pp. 161-62, 166-67, 178.

3. So Kremer, *Lazarus*, p. 72.

4. So Brown, I, p. 435; also Calvin, p. 13.

5. So Lindars, p. 399; Bernard, II, p. 392; also Calvin, p. 11. Schneiders ('Death', p. 54) speaks of Jesus' tears as 'an honest sharing in Mary's grief and perhaps in her anger at death, the enemy of all life'.

naturally expect it (v. 6). Indeed, human sympathy is never stated as a motive for Jesus' healing ministry in this Gospel (cf. Mk 6.34/par.). Jesus' purpose is to reveal the life-giving glory of God, which is loving in a more radical and unexpected sense.

Thus the notion of Jesus' συμπάθεια stands at variance not only with the immediate context but also with the wider context of the Gospel. Expressions of Jesus' humanity, as we have seen elsewhere, do not have independent meaning of themselves (see 4.7-10, 31-32). The σάρξ of Jesus finds its fundamental meaning only in symbolic terms. It is the symbolic meaning of Jesus' emotions in scene 3 that we need to seek. While grief and anger at death are natural human reactions to the death of a loved one, they do not quite fit with the reactions we have already witnessed in Jesus to the death of Lazarus. Jesus' emotions do not relate either to anger at death or grief at its effects on those who mourn. The true meaning must be sought elsewhere.

If on the other hand the meaning of the Lazarus story relates to the events of Easter, then it is likely that Jesus' approaching death provides the key to his anger and distress. The one context within the Gospel where the verb ταράσσω is used of Jesus is in relation to the Passion. At 12.27, where Jesus recognises the advent of the 'hour' with the coming of the Greeks, he gives expression to his distress in the same terms: νῦν ἡ ψυχή μου τετάρακται. Further, at 13.21, Jesus expresses the same emotion at the knowledge of his impending betrayal. There Jesus reveals the identity of the betrayer (13.24-26), gives him leave to carry out his treacherous act (13.27) and Judas departs into the darkness (νύξ, 13.30). May it not be that Jesus' distress arises out of the sudden recognition of the approaching 'hour' of death, precisely at the point of raising Lazarus from the dead?[1]

This interpretation coheres also with the image of childbirth at 16.21, where distress and pain (λύπη) are linked to the approach of the woman's 'hour' of labour. Not only does the image of childbirth parallel Jesus' experience of giving life to Lazarus, it also juxtaposes distress and joy in the same way. Jesus' distress, like that of a woman

1. See Kremer, *Lazarus*, p. 74; also Byrne, *Lazarus*, pp. 57-60, who interprets the verb ταράσσω as Jesus' awareness of his impending death. Jesus, he argues, feels empathy with the mourners and is torn between conflicting emotions (which account for his anger): the natural desire for self-preservation and the pressure he feels to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jesus' decision to raise Lazarus (v. 34) is, in his view, the 'triumph of love over natural desire for self-preservation' (p. 59).

giving birth, is short-lived: what follows is an intense experience of joy. Only in this way can the juxtaposition of Jesus' joy in v. 14 with his grief and anger in vv. 33-38 be understood. They represent both the agony of labour and the joy of giving birth, which is the true meaning of Jesus' journey to Judaea. While Jesus' distress, on a literal level, therefore appears as grief for the loss of Lazarus and sympathy for those who mourn him, this is a misunderstanding of its true meaning.

The breakdown of the literal meaning thus gives rise to the symbolic. Jesus' distress relates symbolically to his impending Passion and resurrection. His role is a maternal one in giving life to believers through pain and suffering. This is the second level meaning which transcends the first. In the same way, Jesus' anger is linked to the rejection which follows. The misunderstanding of Mary and her grieving companions does not of itself cause the anger. Rather it points to the rejection by some of those present in scene 5 which will lead to the plot to kill Jesus. The anger too is part of the symbolism of the approaching 'hour'. It is anger against the final rejection which will eventuate in Jesus' death. For this reason, it is impossible to agree with Brown that the action of any part of this episode fails to advance the narrative.[1] On the contrary, scene 3 is essential for clarifying the symbolic meaning of the raising of Lazarus within Stage 3. It relates to the unfolding revelation of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Scene 4: Raising of Lazarus—Stage 3 cont. (11.38-44)

With the raising of Lazarus in scene 4 (vv. 38-44), we reach the mid-point of the narrative in which the 'sign' takes place. In the face of misunderstanding Jesus chooses 'not to give further teaching, but to act it out in performing the miracle'.[2] Its occurrence already presupposes much of its symbolic nature from the first three scenes which have pointed towards the 'sign' (vv. 4, 15, 33, 34). It is, therefore, part of the explication of the symbolic meaning within Stage 3 of the narrative. An important aspect of this, as we have seen here and elsewhere, lies in what the narrative reveals of Jesus' identity. The three commands, in particular, show the authority and identity of the one who is resurrection and life (v. 25) and who has

1. Brown, I, p. 435.
2. Lindars, p. 398.

the power from God to give life (see 5.21).[1] It is also the power, as the narrative reveals more and more fully, of the one who 'lays down his life in order to take it up again' (10.17). Herein lies the central paradox of the narrative. The authoritative giving of life to Lazarus is at the same time the authoritative laying down of Jesus' own life.

Martha's objection to the opening of the tomb (v. 39) is an instance of misunderstanding[2] and serves an important function within the narrative. As Barrett points out, 'Martha's words both heighten the dramatic feeling of the story and prove that Lazarus was truly dead'.[3] It is also another 'delaying tactic' by the narrator to heighten the tension of the narrative.[4] In spite of her confession at v. 27, Martha is still struggling to understand the significance of Jesus' presence in Bethany and, more specifically, at the tomb.[5] Her doubt does not nullify her earlier confession. It means that, though her faith is centred on Jesus, she has not perceived its full implications. While she understands that Jesus is 'resurrection and life' (christology), and has already expressed the hope that he will raise her brother from the dead, her understanding is still partial. In the moment of crisis her faith wavers at the point of eschatology. She does not yet fully comprehend the 'I am' of Jesus, the revelation of Jesus' gift of life in the present. The narrative still remains within the struggle of Stage 3.

Such a reading of v. 27 is made clear by what follows. Jesus responds immediately to Martha, clarifying her understanding and directing her attention to the transforming moment of the present for believers. In v. 40 he points her to the fact that only when the 'sign' takes place will she perceive the divine radiance. These words of Jesus, more than any other, confirm Martha's lack of understanding: she has not yet fully understood the eschatological presence of the glory of

1. Lindars (p. 402) points out that Jesus' loud cry acts as if to waken Lazarus from sleep (see v. 11).

2. There is an important parallel with the Synoptic story of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi: just as Peter makes the basic christian confession and immediately after tries to hinder Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (Mk 8.32-33/par.), so Martha after an equivalent confession attempts to hinder Jesus in what he is about to do (also related to Jesus' Passion).

3. Barrett, p. 401. Gnilka (p. 93) argues that the reference to putrefaction emphasises, not Martha's lack of faith, but rather the greatness of the miracle.

4. So Lindars, p. 382.

5. See Brown, I, p. 432; Barrett, p. 401; Haenchen, II, p. 67; Lindars, p. 400; Bernard, II, p. 396; Hoskyns, p. 405; Lightfoot, p. 224; and Calvin, p. 14.

God. That is to be revealed to her through the 'sign'. Only then will she able to link symbolically her partial understanding and her confession at v. 27 with her witness to Lazarus' rising from the dead.

Jesus' prayer that follows (vv. 41-42) develops further the understanding of the 'Jews' by making clear the connection between the raising of Lazarus and faith. It also reveals more fully the identity of Jesus in relation to God. The unity of will and purpose that exists between the Father and the Son is so complete that intercession is unnecessary for Jesus (v. 42).[1] The language here, along with that of Jesus' response to Martha (vv. 40-42), is characteristic of the 'signs'. On the one hand there is the theme of glory (v. 40) which points to the loving and life-giving presence of God as revealed through the 'sign'.[2] The revelation functions to evoke and deepen faith (πιστεύσῃς, v. 40; πιστεύσωσιν, v. 42) which communicates God's life. On the other hand the revelation and gift of life are given only through Jesus as God's messenger and the symbol of God's life-giving presence (ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας, v. 42). Like other 'signs', and like the images of the Gospel, the raising of Lazarus manifests symbolically the life-giving presence and glory of God. In this sense it gives rise to faith.

Comparison with John 20. Equally significant for the meaning of the narrative are parallels between this scene and the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus (20.1-18).[3] Here again we draw close to the symbolic meaning of the narrative in relation to Jesus' glorification:

(a) Like Jesus, Mary Magdalene 'comes to the tomb' (ἔρχεται... εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, 11.38, 20.1).

(b) As with the tomb of Lazarus, the narrative focuses largely on the grief and faith of women disciples (Martha and Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene).

1. Bultmann (p. 408) makes the point forcefully: 'The character of his [Jesus'] communion with God is clearly delineated by this: he does not need to make prayer requests like others, who have to rouse themselves out of their attitude of prayerlessness and therefore godlessness; for he continually stands before God as the asker and therefore as the receiver'.

2. Jones (*Narrative Structure*, p. 282) comments that 'the present harsh reality of Lazarus' death in its reek of decay is not shunned (as by Martha at v. 39c) but is directly confronted by Jesus. . . for the sake of the glory'.

3. See Byrne, *Lazarus*, pp. 61, 64-65; Lindars, p. 382; and Lightfoot, p. 225.

(c) The tomb is probably a cave with a horizontal opening against which a stone (λίθος) is laid (11.38, 20.1). The heavy stone is in some way removed (αἴρω, 11.39, 41, 20.1).
(d) The text makes explicit reference to the σουδάριον covering the dead man's face (11.44, 20.7). Both men are freed from the grave-clothes (11.44, 20.6-7).
(e) Both narratives are concerned with faith in relation to the Easter events (11.40; 20.8, 16, 18).

The surprising number of parallels illuminate for the reader the link between the two tombs and the raising of Jesus from the dead: 'la mort et la résurrection de Lazare préfigurement la mort et la résurrection de Jésus'.[1]

At the same time, the differences between the two narratives are at least as great:

(a) Jesus' resurrection, unlike Lazarus', is never described and takes place without human agency. It occurs as the result of Jesus' authoritative power over his own life given him by God, to which no other human being can lay claim.
(b) Jesus is not restored to normal human life as is Lazarus but to a life that transcends mortal limits (see 12.10; 20.17, 19, 26).[2]
(c) The face-veil has a deeper symbolic significance for Jesus, pointing to his unique role in relation to God.[3]

From this we can see the way in which the two stories parallel one another yet are also very different. In fact they relate to one another

1. Delebecque, '"Lazare est mort,"', p. 97.

2. P. Trudinger ('The Meaning of "Life" in St. John: Some Further Reflections', *BTB* 6 [1976], pp. 287-90) over against McNeil, 'Lazarus', makes a good deal of the differences between Lazarus' resurrection and that of Jesus. For him the contrast is most marked in that Lazarus emerges 'still bound hand and foot' whereas Jesus is unbound and leaves the grave-clothes behind (p. 289). See also W.E. Reiser, 'The Case of the Tidy Tomb: The Place of the Napkins of John 11.44 and 20.7', *HeyJ* 14 (1973), p. 54.

3. Cf. S.M. Schneiders, 'The Veil: A Johannine Sign', *BTB* 13 (1981), pp. 94-97, and Byrne, 'Faith of the Beloved Disciple', pp. 85, 88-91, who interpret the σουδάριον as a Johannine 'sign'; see above Introduction, p. 14. See B. Osborne, 'A Folded Napkin in an Empty Tomb: John 11.44 and 20.7 Again', *HeyJ* 14 (1973), pp. 437-40, who regards the napkin as a symbol of human mortality.

as 'sign' to reality, the one, as scene 6 makes clear, standing as a symbol of the other. Lazarus' emergence from the tomb, as we will see, finds its meaning in pointing analogically to Jesus' rising to life, which is of an entirely different quality. The parallels and the differences thus unfold more fully the symbolic meaning of the 'sign' in John 11, particularly as it relates to Jesus' death and resurrection.

Scene 5: Conversion of 'Jews' and Plot—Stages 4 to 5 (11.45-57)
Although nothing is said of Martha's faith immediately following the raising of her brother, every indication points to the overcoming of the remaining obstacles to her faith. The narrator chooses, however, to say no more of the Bethany family until scene 6. Instead the focus shifts to the 'Jews', who now take the narrative to Stage 4 (vv. 45-57). As in other symbolic narratives, the 'sign' and its clarification by Jesus provoke a crisis of faith. Within the chiastic structure, where scene 5 parallels scene 3, it is appropriate that the focus should return to the 'Jews'. Already we have observed their struggle to understand Jesus' emotions as he approaches the tomb. The believing of many of the mourners as a result of the 'sign' (v. 45) brings the narrative to Stage 4 in their acceptance of Jesus as resurrection and life (vv. 25-26)

As a result of the raising of Lazarus, the 'Jewish' witnesses are divided between a majority who believe—to the dismay of the authorities—and a minority who reject Jesus. Some, in a gesture of rejection akin to that of Judas, betray Jesus to the authorities (vv. 45-57). The rejection of the authorities is the negative side of Stage 4 and is closely linked to the symbolic meaning of the 'sign'. Here we see Johannine irony at its best. The misunderstanding of the unbelieving 'Jews' resolves itself not by an increase in understanding but by a deeper level of rejection. In v. 47 the Sanhedrin begins its debate over the 'signs' by expressing uncertainty as to how to proceed: τί ποιοῦμεν. In particular, v. 48 articulates the dilemma as they see it: if they allow Jesus' ministry to continue, it will lead to mass conversion and the end of Israel as they know it. This is ironical; Jesus' ministry does lead to conversion and faith, and it does change the nature and identity of Israel. Nevertheless, for the evangelist, it is not the acceptance of Jesus which will lead to the destruction of Israel but rather his rejection. Caiaphas' response points to the profound and tragic misunderstanding of the 'Jews': ὑμεῖς οὐκ οἴδατε οὐδέν,

οὐδὲ λογίζεσθε ὅτι συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἀπόληται (vv. 49-50).

The high priest's attempt to clarify the situation displays his rejection of Jesus. Ironically, it also leads him to reveal the truth, in an unwittingly prophetic way, a point which the narrator exploits (vv. 51-52). With the preposition ὑπέρ (v. 50), Caiaphas elucidates the meaning of Jesus' death: he is to die for the sake of/on behalf of the people. The narrator interprets this for the reader on its true level. Jesus' death is not just for the nation of Israel, but is universal in its scope (v. 51). The editorial explanation resolves not only the misunderstanding of Caiaphas but also that of the other members of the Sanhedrin at v. 48. On the basis of Caiaphas' conviction that to save the people Jesus must die, the plot is laid, along with the plan to arrest Jesus at Passover, and an arrest warrant issued (vv. 53, 55-57).[1] In these verses the narrative moves to Stage 5. The plot to kill Jesus is the ultimate statement of rejection.

Once again, however, this is ironical. It is precisely through Caiaphas' attempt to rid himself of Jesus that God will gather together τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ διεσκορπισμένα, thereby fulfilling Jesus' life and mission (v. 52).[2] Being drawn εἰς ἕν, the believing community will find life in union with Jesus. The coming of the Gentiles so feared by Caiaphas (v. 48) will take place paradoxically in their seeking of Jesus to find life (see 12.20, 23). Thus, while on one level the drama moves to a statement of outright rejection, on another ironical level it leads to a deepening of understanding for the reader of the Gospel. She now perceives the full significance of Jesus' death as the giving of life to all who believe, Jew and Gentile alike.

The irony of the scene is undergirded by the Johannine view that the authorities, in plotting to do away with Jesus, are carrying out the divine will. Jesus' death is to be the God-ordained way in which he communicates eternal life. It is 'precisely the unbelief that unwittingly

1. See W. Grundmann, 'The Decision of the Supreme Court to Put Jesus to Death (John 11.47-57) in its Context: Tradition and Redaction in the Gospel of John', in E. Bammell and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 302.

2. Dodd (*Interpretation*, p. 368) points out that the 'scattered children of God' is a reference to the Good Shepherd. See Grundmann, 'Decision', pp. 309-18, who notes a major link between the Shepherd discourse and 11.47-57.

and unintentionally must precipitate the δοξασθῆναι of Jesus'.[1] This is already seen in scene 1 where Jesus takes the initiative in journeying to Judaea (v. 7). Here it is apparent in the way that, with the plot already in place (v. 53), Jesus arrives in Jerusalem at his own and not the authorities' discretion (vv. 54, 56; see also 10.18). While the authorities think they are ridding themselves of Jesus and putting an end to the 'signs' (v. 47), their actions have the opposite effect. Ironically, they give the 'sign' of the raising of Lazarus its true meaning. The Sanhedrin (like the Pharisees in Jn 9) becomes the unwitting instrument of the narrative; what Caiaphas has done is to establish its symbolic meaning. Now it is clear that the journey of Jesus to Judaea to raise Lazarus from the dead is symbolic of Jesus' own journey from death to life to bring life to the world. In its definitive rejection of Jesus the Sanhedrin ironically plays a leading role in bringing salvation to the world.

Scene 6: Mary's Anointing—Stage 5 cont. (12.1-8)

The story does not end with the authorities' statement of rejection. Now in scene 6 (12.1-8), through the response of Mary, the narrator takes further the believing response of many 'Jews' (v. 45). In the development of the narrative, Mary, though a disciple of Jesus, is associated with the believing 'Jews', just as Martha earlier is the spokesperson for the disciples. In scene 3, we saw the partial nature of Mary's faith (v. 32), along with the mourners who accompanied her. They were convinced only of Jesus' power to heal the sick, but unable to see beyond the limitations of death. Now the anointing at Bethany brings their attainment of a symbolic understanding to a climax. We have here the positive dimension of Stage 5 of the narrative.

The positive role of scene 6 is seen first in the context in which it takes place. In scene 1, the circle of intimacy which encloses Jesus and the Bethany family (11.3, 5) is threatened by the illness and death of Lazarus, and in scenes 2 and 3 by the disappointed expectations of the two women (11.21, 32). Now in scene 6, the circle is re-formed in the anointing which significantly takes place at a banquet; it is itself a symbol of wholeness and community. With the restoration of Lazarus to life and health (12.1, 2b), the family is now re-united at table. The unity is underlined by Jesus' presence at the meal (see 17.11, 21-23),

1. Bultmann, p. 410.

by Martha's serving/ministering (διακονέω, v. 2a),[1] and above all by Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet (v. 3). Only the presence of the betrayer disturbs the harmony (v. 4).

Secondly, and most importantly, scene 6 represents the climactic faith confession of the narrative. As the chiastic pattern indicates, it parallels Martha's confession at 11.27 while at the same time taking it further. The point is lost when the narrative is not taken as a whole and Martha alone is seen as representing the evangelist's point of view. Martha's serving of Jesus in 12.2a, with its technical and eucharistic overtones, is certainly suggestive of a confession of faith.[2] In Mary's role, however, the confession becomes explicit. Martha's journey of faith, like that of the 'Jews', is taken up into Mary's who completes it (11.20-37, 39-40, 45; 12.2a). Mary does so not in verbal form but with a prophetic action which functions as a faith confession. At the feet of Jesus Mary no longer expresses grief and disappointment, as she did in her first meeting with Jesus (11.32), but love and devotion. They are the marks of true faith and discipleship. In Schüssler Fiorenza's words, she 'articulates the right praxis of discipleship'.[3]

Allusions to Jesus' Death. Thirdly, strong allusions to the death of Jesus are present in scene 6, disclosing the inner symbolic meaning of the narrative. These become more marked when the story of the anointing is compared with that of the Foot Washing in John 13.1-30. There are a number of important parallels between the two scenes:

(a) Both narratives are set within the context of Passover (12.1; 13.1; see 18.28; 19.14, 31, 42).

(b) In both the meal is shared with Jesus among intimate friends and disciples and has sacramental overtones (12.2; 13.1, 2a, 23).[4]

1. According to Schneiders ('Women', pp. 41-42) the verb διακονέω has sacramental overtones and is particularly evocative of the Eucharist. This is seen in the technical overtones of ministry (at least by the end of the first century CE), the implications of Jesus' death, and the link between Mary's anointing and the Foot Washing in Jn 13. See also Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 212-14.

2. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 330.

3. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, p. 330.

4. See Schneiders, 'Women', p. 138.

(c) Judas, the betrayer, is present at both and identified as treasurer of the band of disciples (12.4-6; 13.2, 11, 21-30).[1]

(e) Both narratives involve the anointing/washing and drying of feet as an act of loving service (12.3; 13.4-5), in some way related to Jesus' death (12.7; 13.8b-10).

These parallels show how carefully illusions to the death of Jesus are interwoven into the fabric of the two narratives. The anointing at Bethany, like the Foot Washing, is a story on two levels, the second of which concerns John's understanding of the cross.

The allusions to Jesus' death become explicit at the end of scene 6, where Jesus defends Mary's action in anointing him (vv. 7-8). Not only is the anointing an expression of faith and love, it is also a prophetic action foretelling the death and burial of Jesus. Here the link with the Passion is clear. At first the reader assumes that Mary's act is merely the response of gratitude to Jesus for the restoring of her brother to life. By the end it is clear that her action goes deeper. Mary's confession is more complete than Martha's at 11.27 because it is the full recognition of the symbolic meaning of the 'sign'. Mary acknowledges that, by bringing Lazarus back to life, Jesus has sacrificed his own life. She recognises 'le rapprochement entre la mort de Lazare et celle de Jésus'.[2] Her action is a proclamation of Jesus' authority as ἀνάστασις καὶ ζωή (11.25a), through which he lays down his own life in order to give life to others.

There is no reason to assume, as do some, that the narrator portrays Mary as unconscious of the significance of what she does.[3] On the contrary, if the episode is taken as part of the raising of Lazarus, it signifies the acknowledgement of its symbolic meaning by a human being. Mary's faith story ends with the joyful recognition of the purpose of Jesus' coming. She 'consciously recognized the necessity of the death of Jesus, and, also recognizing that the Hour had come, anticipates His burial by an act of intelligent devotion.'[4] Above all, the

1. Marchadour (*Lazare*, p. 79) comments that Judas is characterised by the narrator as 'the betrayer', just as Mary of Bethany's characterisation is that of 'la femme de l'onction'.

2. Marchadour, *Lazare*, p. 79.

3. Brown (I, p. 449) takes the view that Mary's action is unconscious in regard to Jesus' death and burial; see also Lindars, p. 419, and Gnilka, p. 97.

4. Hoskyns, p. 416. Lightfoot (p. 237) sees the wiping of Jesus' feet as pointing to Mary's belief that death is unable to hold him.

anointing brings the symbolic narrative to a climax in the confession of faith and discipleship which is part of Stage 5. Mary perceives the true meaning of what has taken place in the raising of Lazarus. She sees the death and raising of her brother as symbolic of the death of Jesus through which life is given to believers. This is the only way to make sense of the story within its context. Through the anointing, the narrator brings the narrative to its climax. In one simple act Mary unveils the symbolic meaning of the 'sign'.[1]

As in the narrative of John 6, the betrayer also is present in the context of believing confession (vv. 4-6; see 6.68-71). Judas' words of reproach in v. 5 show a complete lack of understanding of Mary's deed. As an act of love directed toward Jesus, it would have been better spent in caring for the poor. On one level the point is undeniable. However, the narrator does not allow the reader to take the argument at face-value. Judas' objection is framed on either side by reference to his 'betrayal' (vv. 4, 6). He betrays both the life of Jesus (ὁ μέλλων αὐτὸν παραδίδοναι, v. 4) and the trust of the small group of friends whose financial security he controls (κλέπτης ἦν, v. 6). His hypocritical objection is answered by Jesus in v. 7: Mary's action is not primarily an act of love, although it is at least that. More importantly, it is her recognition of the inner meaning of the 'sign', a recognition which identifies at the heart of the raising of Lazarus the necessity for Jesus' death.[2]

Judas' objection, therefore, is part of the statement of rejection involved in Stage 5. In this sense, he belongs with the Sanhedrin in its rejection of Jesus (11.47-53; see 13.29-30, 18.3). Like the unbelieving 'Jews', Judas is operating on a materialistic level. The anointing has no

1. See Brown, I, p. 454: 'The session of the Sanhedrin is the supreme expression of refusal to believe; the anointing by Mary is a culminating expression of loving faith.'

2. There are two problems associated with vv. 7-8: the original text and the awkardness of the construction. It is unlikely that the reading of D in omitting v. 8 is correct; the majority of witnesses favour its inclusion ($\mathfrak{P}^{66}$ A B and others). The second problem is the meaning of τηρέω. Is Mary to keep more of the perfume until Jesus' burial? Barrett (p. 414) paraphrases it as 'keep it in mind': Mary is to remember her action at Jesus' burial. Lindars (pp. 418-19) and Talbert (p. 184) interpret the verb in relation to Judas' criticism in v. 5: Mary has kept/held on to the anointment rather than selling it, in order to use it for Jesus' burial. Schnackenburg (II, p. 369) points out that, though the reading as it stands is difficult, it means more or less the same as Mk 14.8.

meaning for him except in crass materialistic terms: it is a waste of good money. Here the irony is sharp in the contrast between Judas and Mary as disciples of Jesus. The male disciple, who rejects a symbolic understanding, and through whose betrayal the death of Jesus will take place, is contrasted with the female disciple who understands the life-giving necessity of Jesus' death. The response of both characters epitomises the opposing dimensions of Stage 5 of the narrative. Mary represents the positive statement of confession, while Judas represents the rejection of Jesus and the meaning of the 'sign'.

There is a further dimension to Mary's act of confession and discipleship: she responds to the cost of Jesus' love in raising Lazarus (11.5) in a parallel gesture of costliness and love.[1] This is emphasised in the quantity and quality of the perfume (λίτραν μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτίμου, v. 3a), and the odour that pervades the house (ἡ δὲ οἰκία ἐπληρώθη ἐκ τῆς ὀσμῆς τοῦ μύρου, v. 3b).[2] The value of the perfume and the extravagance of Mary's action is itself a symbol of the extravagance of Jesus' action in giving life to Lazarus. It symbolises the death of Jesus, which is the cost of the 'sign'. It acts, as it were, as a symbol within a symbol. Mary responds to God's costly self-giving in Jesus (see 3.16) with her own costly self-giving. Like Jesus, and as his true disciple, she acts as a symbol of the life-giving presence of God. In this, the greatest of the 'signs', Mary's confession is greater than any previous confession.[3]

Scene 7: Plot to Kill Lazarus (12.9-11)

The chiastic structure of the narrative means, as we have seen, that it begins and ends in a concentric way. Although scene 7 (12.9-11) makes sense structurally, however, it is at first glance inexplicable. Ironically, Lazarus is now in the same position as when the narrative

1. See Byrne, *Lazarus*, pp. 59-60, who stresses the parallel between the cost to Jesus' life and the cost of Mary's action. According to J.E. Bruns ('A Note on John 12,3', *CBQ* 28 [1966], p. 220) the perfume is worth almost a year's wages for a labourer.

2. The odour of the perfume here contrasts with the smell of decay at 11.39. Gnilka (p. 97, following Bultmann, p. 415) interprets the fragrance symbolically of salvation: 'Jesu Wort will die ganze Welt durchdringen'.

3. The significance of Mary's action also points forward to the burial of Jesus by Nicodemus (19.39-40), confirming that it is his statement of faith. See above, Chapter 2, p. 57.

began: with his life under threat. The scene has two important functions within the narrative. First, the motif of faith/rejection in Stage 5 is confirmed in these verses. The more people come to faith as a result of the raising of Lazarus (vv. 9, 11), the more the authorities determine to prevent it and put an end to Jesus' ministry (see 11.47-48). For this reason, they now plot to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus (v. 10). The point emphasises the consequences of being a disciple of Jesus. Disciples share the same fate of rejection as their master (see 12.25-26 and 17.14; also 9.22, 34).[1]

Secondly, vv. 9-11 emphasise the mortality of Lazarus despite his experience of being raised. Here the narrator makes it clear that what Lazarus has experienced is not resurrection in the Johannine sense, but 'a resuscitation to the life of the flesh'.[2] This is of crucial significance for the symbolism of the narrative. In terms of John's theology of σάρξ and δόξα, it means that Lazarus' raising from the dead belongs to the domain of σάρξ. Its effects are confined to the world of material reality.[3] Unlike Jesus after his resurrection, Lazarus is still mortal, still susceptible to death. The point reveals the way the symbolism operates throughout the narrative. If the raising of Lazarus still leaves him vulnerable to death so soon after his raising, then the literal meaning of the 'sign' begins to break down. We are left with the almost ludicrous possibility that Lazarus will be murdered immediately after celebrating his restoration to life (12.2). Jesus' action in risking his life to save Lazarus from death turns out to be absurdly in vain. The reader is compelled, therefore, to seek a second level meaning for the narrative.

The second level meaning is to be found precisely in the intrusion of the Jesus story. The narrative of 11.1–12.11 is 'not only the story of dead Lazarus raised to life, it is also the story of Jesus going to face

1. Gnilka, p. 97.
2. Lindars, p. 382.
3. The point is made forcefully by Haenchen, II, p. 71 who argues that Lazarus' experience 'was an event that took place in the world. He presumably soon dies again, as John 12.10 hints'. See also Kremer, *Lazarus*, p. 57, who regards Lazarus' restoration to life as 'ein schwaches Zeichen' of God's power over death: 'denn Gottes Macht vermag mehr, als einen Gestorbenen in diese Welt zurückzurufen.' Against this, cf. W.R. Clark, 'Jesus, Lazarus and Others: Resuscitation or Resurrection', *Religion in Life* 49 (1980), pp. 230-41, who argues that there is no qualitative difference between Jesus' raising and that of Lazarus.

death in order to conquer death'.[1] Lazarus' rising from the dead is the σάρξ which symbolises the divine δόξα revealed in Jesus (see 13.31-32). The ζωοποίησις which Jesus exercises on God's behalf (5.21, 24-26, 28), and which is exemplified in his raising of Lazarus, is fulfilled precisely in the Easter events. There Jesus gives life to others at the cost of his own; there he reveals the divine authority to lay down his life and take it up again. It is to this that the final reference to the threat against Lazarus' life is directed. It points symbolically to the death and resurrection of Jesus for the sake of those who believe.

C. *Conclusion*

Although the story of the raising of Lazarus at first appears to be different from previous symbolic narratives, it in fact conforms to the basic pattern. The same structure is present in the five Stages of the narrative leading from misunderstanding either to a full understanding and confession or to outright rejection of Jesus. The former is represented by the disciples, a number of the 'Jews' and in particular by Martha and Mary. Outright rejection is represented by Judas and the members of the Sanhedrin who plot Jesus' death. The dramatic movement from a literal to a symbolic understanding reaches a climax in the anointing/confession of Mary, which is the positive side of Stage 5.

As in the case of other 'signs', the raising of Lazarus is an event on the level of σάρξ which invokes for the reader a second level symbolic understanding. The reader is drawn into the narrative and challenged, like the characters of the drama, to seek the divine glory in the flesh. This is found principally in the utterance of v. 25 (ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή) as enunciated through the 'sign'. As in other symbolic narratives, the revelation leads to a faith crisis in which the implied reader chooses to accept or reject the symbolic meaning unfolded through the narrative.[2] Both options are presented in full in this narrative. The reader is summoned to identify positively

1. Dodd, *Interpretation*, p. 367. Lindars (p. 383) describes this as a 'dress rehearsal for the Resurrection of Jesus himself'.

2. Rochais (*Les récits de résurrection*, p. 142) makes the same point when he speaks of the resurrection of Lazarus as 'le symbole de résurrection actuelle du croyant dans le foi'.

with Martha, Mary and the believing 'Jews' and negatively with Judas and the unbelieving 'Jews'.

At the same time, the differences from other symbolic narratives, though they do not detract from the symbolic nature of the narrative, are not insignificant. They need to be understood in terms of the change of emphasis from the incarnation to the cross (inasmuch as these can be separated). The Lazarus story does not just point symbolically to another aspect of Jesus as the giver of eternal life. It reveals Jesus as the one who gives life at the cost of death, depicting symbolically his own journey from death to life. This factor explains the central position of the 'sign' within the overall structure of the narrative. Jesus' story is a second narrative theme which, though at first disruptive, becomes the inner meaning of the 'sign'. The body of Lazarus restored from death to life is symbolic, not only of Jesus' authority to give life, but more importantly of Jesus' own journey from death to life for the sake of believers. Once again we see the way in which narrative form and theological meaning cohere. The invasion of the first story by the second within the literary structures is precisely what gives it its theological meaning.

The raising of Lazarus also points to the transformation of mortal existence within the experience of the implied reader. The life of the flesh which is given back to Lazarus becomes, through the narrative, the event belonging to σάρξ which opens the way for the symbolic meaning. The natural life to which Lazarus is restored acts as a symbol of ζωὴ αἰώνιος. It is to this that all the previous symbolic narratives of the Gospel have pointed. Human existence, indeed all material reality, becomes through the incarnation symbolic of the divine. The story of the resuscitation of Lazarus to the life of the flesh, which is concerned with the transformation of natural life, is thus the greatest example of Jesus' gift of life. Human life, which is valuable in itself, finds a new and deeper meaning in pointing symbolically to the life that Jesus offers from the Father. Here the flesh is not discarded but given a new symbolic significance. Natural life is now the symbol of divine life.[1]

The raising of Lazarus is also the greatest of the symbolic narratives because it leads, both theologically and in its narrative

1. See Byrne, *Lazarus*, pp. 51-53, 64-65, esp. pp. 86-89, whose central argument is that the giving of natural life to Lazarus is a symbol of the eternal life offered by Jesus to believers.

form, to the supreme act of love and life-giving in the cross which reveals the divine δόξα. It is to this event that the reader of the Gospel is invited to respond in faith. Jesus becomes for the reader 'resurrection and life' as she comes to understand the symbolic dimensions through identification—both positive and negative—with the leading characters. It is not a material life that she is offered, but an eternal one, through the symbolic role of the flesh. Jesus' journey from death to life becomes the implied reader's own story, as she shares the developing faith of Martha, Mary and the mourners. By entering the narrative and moving beyond the material to the symbolic the reader shares the transforming experience of eternal life, within and beyond the boundaries of present existence. Her own mourning for human mortality is changed into the joy of resurrection. In this sense, she rediscovers her own life as a profound symbol of the divine.

Chapter 8

REVIEW AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Six narratives of the Fourth Gospel have been examined from a literary and theological perspective. First, the cohesion of narrative and symbol has been explored. Secondly, each of these narratives has been shown to have in common a distinct five-stage literary structure. Thirdly, there is a dynamic interplay in these narratives between literary form and theological meaning. This interplay is in parallel with the Gospel's theology of incarnation. These three points will be briefly recapitulated before some observations on the theological implications of this kind of symbolic narrative are given as a final conclusion.

A. *Cohesion of Narrative and Symbol*

In John's symbolic narratives, symbol and narrative operate together in a cohesive and integrated way. While the Fourth Gospel as a whole is the product of both narrative and symbol, the union of the two is strikingly present in the narratives we have addressed, being more fully developed in these than elsewhere in the Gospel. The symbolic narratives serve to unfold symbolic meaning. They are created out of the struggle of the leading characters to move beyond an initial, materialistic response to Jesus' person and ministry, and reach a symbolic understanding. The true symbolic meaning emerges through the narrative, whether or not the characters accept or reject it. In this sense, narrative gives rise to symbol just as the movement towards symbol gives rise to narrative. The two interact in a dynamic way, giving the narratives their unique shape. The cohesion of narrative and symbol explains their unusual characteristics and length.

This interaction between symbol and narrative is based on the way in which metaphor and symbol operate to create new meaning. The coming together of tenor and vehicle in metaphor creates a new

semantic reality and gives rise to the narrative. The 'signs', the images, and also the feasts of Judaism in the Fourth Gospel are scripted in the same way to create new meaning. As the narrative unfolds, the literal meaning breaks down so that a second level meaning is able to emerge. The 'signs', images and feasts are thus transformed through the narrative into symbols that find their meaning in the Johannine Jesus. This semantically generative understanding of metaphor and symbol, therefore, makes sense of John's narratives. Their meaning is dependent on the symbolism and can only be understood within a metaphorical framework. Symbolic narrative is created by the interaction between symbol and narrative: the two are inextricably linked.

B. *Structure of the Symbolic Narratives*

Although the symbolic narratives belong within the overall narrative context of the Gospel and share the same theological outlook, they also have their own characteristics. Their unique structure is more highly developed and more sharply focused than other narratives of the Gospel. We distinguish them from other narratives by their length, the intense focus on a particular symbol, the depth of characterisation, and the struggle for faith and understanding evinced by the leading characters.

The first narrative is concerned with the image of birth in the story of Nicodemus (3.1-32) and the last with the theme of life through death in the Raising of Lazarus (11.1–12.11), thus creating an *inclusio*. The narratives cluster around the movement from darkness to light, from the darkness and potential for life in the womb and from the darkness of the grave, to the light of life. In the final narrative, Jesus' journey from death to life to give life to the dead, which is the symbolic meaning of the 'sign', is linked to the image of birth in the first narrative. Jesus' emotions at the grave of Lazarus (11.33, 35, 38) are related to the approach of his 'hour'. As a woman in labour gives birth through pain and sorrow (16.21), so Jesus will give life to believers through the 'labour' of his death (see 19.26-27, 31-37). Yet Jesus' journey to death is overtaken by the life that he possesses authoritatively within himself (10.17-18). As the first narrative, centred on the image of childbirth, is the journey to life, so the last narrative is about the journey to life, through the image of rising from the dead.

The movement from death to life is reflected in the way faith develops throughout the narratives. In the first narrative, Nicodemus is indecisive (3.9) and stands somewhere between true believers and unbelieving 'Jews'. The narrative co-opts the figure of John the Baptist to complete the journey of faith (3.22-30). In the last narrative, the story of Lazarus represents both the highest confession of faith (12.1-8) and the deepest expression of rejection (11.47-53). The same movement is apparent through the middle narratives. The healing of the man in John 5 is concerned with the rejection of Jesus by the 'Jews', a rejection which is partly, though not fully, articulated in a narrative way. The feeding in John 6 is concerned with the tragedy of rejection but exemplifies also the faith of the Twelve. The healing in John 9 represents a symmetrical double movement in the coming-to-faith of the man born blind and corresponding alienation of the Pharisees.

The intensifying of faith is seen particularly in the faith confessions of disciples: John the Baptist at 3.28-30; the Samaritan woman and the villagers at 4.28-29, 42; Peter and the Twelve at 6.68-69; the man born blind at 9.35-38; and Martha and Mary of Bethany at 11.27, 12.1-8. There is a progression throughout the narratives from death to life, paralleled by the movement from life to death. The latter is apparent in the theme of rejection: the rejection of the 'Jews' at 5.18, 45-47; the 'scandal' experienced by disciples at 6.66, 70b-71; the 'blindness' and sin of the Pharisees at 9.41; and the plot to kill Jesus by the Sanhedrin at 11.47-53, which includes reference to Judas' betrayal at 12.4-6. The supreme irony is that it is precisely through rejection—on the cross—that God's life-giving is revealed to the world.

This dramatic progression is seen, from a synchronic perspective, in the five Stages of the narrative which we have identified. The narratives begin by establishing a foundational symbol which consists of an image and/or miraculous 'sign' and/or Jewish feast (Stage 1). Stage 2 is reached in the response of misunderstanding in which the characters assume a materialistic interpretation of both the symbol and Jesus. The main part of the narrative is the struggle for deeper understanding in Stage 3: Jesus challenges the leading characters to move from a materialistic to a symbolic understanding. The narrative then moves to a resolution in Stages 4 and 5, which can take a positive and/or negative direction. The attainment of a symbolic understanding

leads to confession of faith, and the rejection of the symbolism leads to an explicit statement of rejection.

At the same time, each narrative bears its own individual stamp. The narrative of John 3 is brought to its fourth and fifth Stages through the witness of the Baptist, who achieves on behalf of Judaism what Nicodemus' indecision in 3.9 is unable to do. John 4.1-42, though based on the image of water/the well, includes two further symbols as the narrative unfolds, sacred place and food/harvest. In John 5, the narrative does not proceed beyond the third Stage, but the discourse contains strong hints of a fourth and fifth Stage. The narrative of John 6 is unusual for the length of Stage 3 and the dramatic way in which the movement towards faith changes to deepening alienation. In John 9, the central act is distinguished by the absence of Jesus and the presence of conflict and persecution, which ironically play the same revelatory role as that of Jesus elsewhere in the Gospel. Finally, the story of Lazarus has the 'sign' at the core of its chiastic structure, and the theme of Jesus' glorification through death and resurrection as its symbolic heart. These variations do not weaken the basic form. On the contrary, each in its own way discloses the underlying structure of the five Stages of the narrative. Each individual narrative reveals the richness and diversity of the narrator's skill operating creatively within defined structure.

C. *Literary Form and Theological Meaning*

This study began by demonstrating the complex inter-relationship between form and content in biblical texts. The interplay between form and meaning is particularly evident in the use of symbol in the symbolic narratives of the Fourth Gospel. A symbol is something taken from the natural or human world and made the bearer of transcendent meaning (Schneiders). Just as a literary text is both a series of mirrors turning inward on themselves and also a window on the world outside (Krieger), so symbols have two paradoxical dimensions: the semantic, which is the symbol's articulation in discourse, and the non-semantic, which is the symbol's relationship to life (Ricoeur). The two aspects are present in these Johannine narratives, which both convey and yet also give rise to theological meaning. In addition to their literary infrastructure, the narratives are also fundamentally related to faith and human experience.

The two dimensions, the semantic and non-semantic, find a parallel in the basic theological outlook of the Gospel. Incarnate λόγος is the symbolic expression of imperceptible θεός in the Johannine worldview. The Logos in human flesh is the archetypal symbol of God. In theological terms, this means that σάρξ and δόξα/πνεῦμα stand not in a dualistic relationship, in the terms of Hellenistic (Platonic) philosophy, but rather relate to each other as symbol to reality. What is intended by the narrative is the re-appropriation of σάρξ to become symbolic of the divine. This change in the signification of σάρξ, which occurs only through the narrative form, is the meaning of revelation for John (O'Day).

John's symbolic narratives open the reader to embrace subjectively, as well as intellectually, the Johannine worldview. The literary structures embody and thus communicate to the implied reader the symbolic and christological vision of the Gospel. Just as σάρξ is not rejected but drawn theologically into symbol, so also narrative form draws the reader subjectively to faith (20.31). The implied reader, making the correct responses, is won over by the double correlation of the narratives—on the one hand between literary form and theological utterance, and on the other hand in the dramatic, narrative progression from image/'sign' to symbol.

The symbolic transformation which takes place within the narrative thus facilitates an authentic reader response, as the reader identifies with the movement towards symbol and reflects on its existential meaning. The symbolic narratives are an invitation to the implied reader to experience birth 'from above', an invitation which is answered when she embraces the evangelist's symbolic interpretation of reality. All that is encompassed by the term σάρξ is now perceived anew as the reflection of the divine δόξα. By accepting the Johannine Jesus as symbol of God, the reader embraces not only God but also her own identity as belonging to God and made in God's image, finding there a new self-understanding. In the response of the reader the evangelist sees judgement (κρίσις) taking place, in its positive as well as negative dimensions (3.18-19). The symbolic narratives are the medium of that judgment within the experience of the reader. In this perspective, form and meaning, and literary text and subjective experience, are profoundly interlocked.

D. *Theological Implications*

In its immediate Johannine environment, the evangelist's outlook arises from what is essentially a religious context. The images, as well as feasts, relate to Judaism as experienced and interpreted by the Johannine community in the post-70 CE situation. These aspects of the narratives find their reference point in the Torah and in a developed notion of Sophia as the manifestation of God's presence. Similarly, the 'signs' are events of a miraculous nature which point to a religious interpretation of reality within Judaism. The evangelist is primarily concerned with this rival interpretation of religious experience. In the symbolic narratives, the text constructs alternative religious visions in a way that is polemical and partisan. It sets out the one (represented by οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in their rejection of Jesus) as deficient in terms of salvation and the other (represented by Jesus and his true disciples) as the only adequate medium of eternal life.

Nevertheless, while this construction is embedded in the socio-historical context of the Johannine community, it is essentially a literary construction and opens itself to a modern interpretative horizon. The Johannine text interprets the false alternative, in spite of its religious orientation, as finally imprisoned within the material realm. Fundamentally, the Gospel's concern is with two different interpretations of σάρξ. In the first, material reality is seen as meaningful only in itself. It involves an absolutising of the created order without reference to the divine as interpreted in Jesus (1.18). In this view, σάρξ is understood in a self-sufficient way. Creation and human existence derive meaning from within their own structures and are independent of the Creator. Whether or not this is linked to a religious worldview makes no difference: σάρξ exists absolutely, in and for itself, without connection to the symbolic Other as revealed in Jesus.

In the second view, σάρξ plays an important role in its symbolic form. It is not rejected in favour of a 'spiritualised' or Platonic view of reality, which may seem at first the only alternative. On the contrary, the divine being communicates itself through, and only through, the realities of human existence. The theological grounding for this is the incarnation (1.14). The divine δόξα is not revealed behind the flesh as its essence but rather in and through its structures. That is the meaning of Jesus as the symbol of God. The incarnation gives a radically new perspective to the meaning of human existence,

which now becomes capable of symbolising the saving presence of God. Indeed σάρξ gains its deepest meaning in becoming symbolic of the divine δόξα. The Fourth Gospel is primarily concerned with this aspect of σάρξ.

At the same time, implicit in John's theology is an affirmation of σάρξ as part of creation. The world has the potential to symbolise divine reality precisely because it is the product of God's creative activity. The domain of σάρξ belongs to God both through creation and through the eschatological transformation of its death and darkness. The gift of life/salvation offered to human beings in Jesus is synonymous with the life of creation. They are not two opposing kinds of life. They both spring from the hand of God and are part of the inner life of God's own self. They relate to each other in a symbolic way: natural life, the life of creation, is a symbol of eschatological life.

The point is seen most sharply in the relationship of human life to God. In the first creation account, humankind is created in the image of God (צלם [LXX εἰκών] Gen. 1.26-27). Because of the incarnation, this gift of creation is restored. Human beings can now 'image' God by becoming God's children and gaining a new eschatological identity (1.12-13). This new identity is paradoxically the restoration of an original created destiny. In becoming symbols of God, like Jesus, human beings take on the identity for which they were created. Here again, human life reaches its zenith in symbolising eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος). The same is true for all created reality. The images of the narratives, such as bread, water and light, take on a new symbolic identity because they are the work of God's creation (Painter). Their symbolic transformation, like that of human beings, is dependent on the incarnation of the Logos, who is the agent of creation and yet also part of it. The created world finds its true identity as symbolic of its Creator.

John's incarnational theology has immediate implications for the modern Western context, where a false materialistic alternative is linked to the realities of a secularised culture. In the first place, the spirituality of the Gospel challenges modern, consumerist attitudes which regard the world as dispensable. Because the world is God's creation and because, more importantly, it has the symbolic potential to reveal God, it cannot be exploited or used in a destructive way. To

do so is to nullify not only its created origins but also its eschatological identity bestowed in the incarnation. Creation in John's theology can be neither abused nor manipulated, any more than human beings can. The world belongs to God, is the sphere of God's loving and saving activity, and is also the bearer of God's presence. It is sacred to God both in its origins and destiny.

Secondly, John's perspective challenges views which, on the other extreme, regard the created order as self-limiting and absolute. Modern movements which oppose the exploitation of the earth from such a perspective are, in the Gospel's theological framework, equally problematical. To regard the world as an absolute reality within itself, without reference to its Creator, is a more subtle and insidious form of the same materialism. The idolatry of creation is not the only alternative to its exploitation. Such an idolatry is the modern version of the perspective of the unbelieving 'Jews' in the Gospel who absolutise their own traditions and fail to understand them in symbolic and spiritual terms. The contemporary equivalent likewise fails to acknowledge that the value of the world lies precisely in its capacity to disclose, through Jesus, the life-giving presence of God.

Thirdly, John's theology challenges not only secularism but also a modern religious orientation which in effect denies the value of human life. The 'Jewish' worldview, for the Fourth Gospel, is judged for its inability to perceive the true meaning of its own traditions. Lacking a symbolic perspective that is focused on Jesus, the religion of the 'Jews' is finally rejected as narrow and life-denying. There can be no question here of justifying Christian anti-Semitism. John's challenge is better directed away from Judaism and towards movements within christianity which try to assert 'spiritual' values over against 'human' values. Such movements can be guilty of the same charge that the Gospel levels (rightly or wrongly) against the religious leadership of the synagogue. To deny the sacramental significance of human existence is to end up in the same place as the 'Jews' in the Fourth Gospel. It is to offer human beings a religion which is ultimately legalistic and life-denying. In failing to affirm the value of σάρξ, and lacking any real theology of creation, such movements end up constricting and delimiting the meaning of salvation.

The evangelist offers a radically different option. The value of the created order lies in its capacity to be the bearer of divine reality. In its symbolic function, the world gains new value and dignity coming

from its intrinsic relationship to God. In this symbolic view, creation is neither exploited nor given absolute significance nor undervalued. On the contrary, the meaning of eternal life is to be found in a transformed understanding of the true, symbolic value of natural life. The Fourth Gospel invites the modern reader to embrace a different perspective on σάρξ, in which, through the incarnation, it is perceived as God-bearing and God-revealing. Here the notion of flesh is both affirmed theologically and, at the same time, transformed. This is the true meaning of the revelation of God in the human flesh of Jesus.

Particularly through engagement with the symbolic narratives, the contemporary reader is drawn into a new way of understanding creation and human existence. Both are now valued for their capacity to symbolise the divine δόξα. This new perception offered the reader can only become effective through faith. An authentic reader response is in fact a faith response. In the Fourth Gospel, faith involves both the recognition of Jesus as God's incarnate Son and a new understanding of the world as sharing the same symbolic identity. Through the perception of faith, the reader gains for herself a new identity. Her own life, like that of creation, now becomes a symbol for God's life.

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